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"Without Shedding of Blood
is no Pardon"







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THE



ALTAR OF EARTH.

BY

MRS. T. S. CHILDS.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission."

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THOU art the King of glory, O Christ!

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man,

Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,

Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God,

In the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge;

We therefore pray thee help thy servants

Whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy saints

In glory everlasting. Amen.

INTRODUCTORY.

MY DEAR TEACHER: I am afraid you thought me very irreverent in what I said in the class last Sabbath about the Old Testament and the sacrifices of the Bible. I did not mean to be irreverent. I was brought up to reverence the Bible and to believe everything that is in it, but I have heard so much lately—sometimes, too, from Christians, and even from ministers—that is contrary to what I was taught as a child that I hardly know what to believe. When I was in B—— last summer, I heard Dr. —— preach; he is a lovely preacher, and everybody went to hear him. He preached about Christ, and said “the blood of Christ was not an essential thing in Christ’s work: it was his life and the way that life influenced ours.” He said, too, we had “nothing to do with the sacrifices of

the Old Testament ; they belonged to a ruder age and were for a ruder people than ours." This seemed reasonable and attractive, but I know it is not what my father and my mother believed. At our daily family worship there were no hymns we sung oftener than—

" Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress,"

and,

" There is a fountain filled with blood."

We were a happy family, and I cannot help thinking that this was in some way connected with my father's and my mother's simple and peaceful faith. But I am not as happy now as I was then. I do not love the Bible as I did ; I do not understand it ; and when you were speaking of the sacrifices of the Old Testament it did seem to me, as I said, that they were very needless and very cruel. I cannot see any use or any meaning in them ; yet if they are in the Bible, and if the Bible is the word of God, I know they must be there for something. But it is all dark to me. I wish you could help me.

There is no one else I can ask, for I am almost alone in the world.

Your affectionate pupil,
F——.

MY DEAR F——: It was like yourself to write me so frankly of your religious difficulties, and I thank you sincerely for it. It is a priceless blessing to have had parents whose faith and life are a safe standard for you, and their influence will never be lost upon you. If I can do anything to help you into a "like precious faith," it will be a great pleasure to me. Instead, however, of trying to meet any single and special difficulty, I propose a few familiar letters on the sacrifices of the Bible. I do this with the hope not only that some of your perplexities may be relieved, but also that you may be led to a fuller study of the whole Bible for yourself. I know from my own experience how you feel in reference to certain parts of the Old Testament, and I can only hope that your later experience may be also like mine in such a view of their beauty and truth as seems to you now quite impossible.

In carrying out my plan I shall very likely go beyond it and bring in a good deal not directly connected with the sacrifices. However, I hope this may not be less profitable to you. The history that surrounds the sacrificial system of the Old Testament is in itself both interesting and instructive; and if it shall prove so to you, I shall be more than repaid.

Your affectionate teacher,

J. L. C.

THE ALTAR OF EARTH.

LETTER I.

OLD-TESTAMENT SACRIFICES.

MY DEAR F——: I have long wished you could early become familiar with certain truths that, though often hidden, run through the Bible and when understood shed wonderful light on every part. I do not think the Bible can be read intelligently or with much satisfaction if these truths are not seen. If I had myself seen them earlier, I am sure I should have had more pleasure and received much more benefit in the study of the Bible when I was young. It is because I want you not to miss this enjoyment and profit that I undertake with peculiar pleasure these simple letters. Let us call them *Letters on the Sacrifices of the Bible*.

I need not say to you that very much of the Bible is quite plain and easy even for a

child to understand. There is enough for any one to be saved by. This is a great and precious fact. At the same time, there is enough in the Bible that is obscure to lead us to an earnest and careful study of its pages. I think this is one reason why it is obscure: God wants us to "search the Scriptures" even as "for hid treasures." There *are* treasures here which are found only by careful "search:" they will not come to us by careless or indifferent reading; and why should we not work as hard, if need be, to find out the truths of the word of God as we do to find the truths of chemistry or astronomy, or as we often do to acquire a new language? The truths of the Bible will be most important to us when all other truth will be of little account. If, therefore, these studies should sometimes seem to you dry and uninviting, I hope you will not be turned from them. It will be my fault, and not the fault of the book we study.

Perhaps the word "sacrifice" itself will not be an attractive one to you—from what you say in your letter I judge it will not be—but if we shall be led by a higher than

human guide in our search for the meaning of the sacrifices of the Bible, the search will surely not end in disappointment or in failure. In the Old Testament we shall find a gradual but steadily increasing revelation of the divine plan in behalf of men's salvation. As the centuries moved on, clearer and yet clearer light was shed upon that plan until "the fullness of time was come." In all this the sacrifices had a central place. The most interesting part of our study will be to trace out how these were all fulfilled in Christ, and to catch the constantly unfolding revelation of him as the great Sacrifice for us. The references throughout the New Testament to the types and ceremonies of the Old Testament are striking and beautiful. The very language in which it is written is framed according to them, and we lose very much of its interest and profit if we do not understand them. Only in it all let us remember that

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Can give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away—
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

LETTER II.

THE FIRST SACRIFICE.

HAVE you thought, my dear F——, what the life of our first parents was in Paradise before they sinned, when God walked with them and talked with them as a loving Friend, and when they were perfectly happy because perfectly holy? But after they fell everything was changed. From this life of sweet companionship with God, with its holy thoughts, they were left alone with their misery and sin and vain regrets. They had even lost the true knowledge of their God. They were ignorant of the dreadful nature of their sin, for sin always blinds those who commit it. They were exposed to God's displeasure, and to all that was meant by the threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." What were they to do? If there was any hope for them, they must be taught something they

had not known before: they must know God himself as they had never known him before—as One who could be just and holy, and yet who could forgive and love the sinful. But they knew nothing of such a God as this. They knew they were sinners, but how a holy God could love and save sinners they could not know.

How changed, then, everything is! Now, when they hear the well-known voice calling to them at the accustomed hour in the cool of the day, they hide themselves with shame and fright. Yet the voice spoke not in un pitying anger, as it might have done; for when tremblingly they obey and afterward confess their sin, God's first words of condemnation are not for them. He turns from them and pronounces the curse upon their tempter, who had used the form of the serpent. And it is wonderful that that very curse had mercy in it for Adam and Eve, for God adds to it that, although the serpent, the devil, would yet do greater harm to them and to their children, there would come a descendant of Eve who should at last destroy him. Turn to Gen. iii. 15, and you can

read, as you often have read, what I refer to :
“ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Let us study this carefully. A wound upon the head, you know, is much more dangerous than one upon the heel. To crush the head would be to kill ; the bruising of the heel is a much slighter hurt. So these words mean, as I understand, that there should be a descendant of the woman upon whom the tempter should inflict some injury for a time, but who should finally destroy him and his power for ever. This we know was fulfilled specially in Christ, “ the woman’s ” child. The devil hurt him all he could as long as he lived, and finally induced Judas to betray him to death. But Christ conquered, after all. He showed he was the victor by rising from the dead. Through his death “ he destroyed him that has the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. ii. 14, 15.

We know all this, and most precious knowledge it is. But how much of it did our first parents know? They may probably have believed that there was to be some person born into the world who would prevent the terrible consequences of their sin. It seems as if they began to expect such a deliverer at once, and that Eve must have meant this when her first child was born, and she called his name Cain, for she said, "I have gotten a man" (or *the* man) "from the Lord." It must have been a bitter disappointment when she saw him grow up a wicked man, and her heart grew weary in waiting and looking for the Deliverer to come.

We may suppose, then, I think, that Adam and Eve confidently expected some one who would appear to help them and to save them from the suffering they deserved. They knew something, but they needed to be taught much more. So, it seems to me, God did for them just as we often do in teaching others: he showed them by visible objects what he wanted them to learn. You know how much easier it is to understand

many things if they are pictured to us in some way by a drawing or an illustration that we can see. In some such way God probably taught men the wonderful truth how they were to be saved.

Let us suppose that he directed Adam to take a lamb from his flock and to kill it. Now, it is not likely that our first parents had ever seen death; could they, therefore, have known what God meant when he said to them, "Thou shalt die"? But when they saw the blood flowing from the wound, and the lamb lying dead, with life and joy gone for ever, they could understand something of what it was to die. And if they understood, however dimly, that the death of the lamb was on account of their sin, it was the first morning light of redemption, but a light which would grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Do you ask: Why did not God tell them at once more clearly about Christ as a Saviour? Our answer can only be this: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

One of my young friends asked me not long since if I thought Adam and Eve

could understand about Christ from the few words of dim promise God spoke to them. I could only answer that it is very probable, as God had given to them the promise of a Deliverer, especially if he had taught them about the sacrifices—that he also explained their meaning sufficiently for them to accept and believe what he revealed to them of the way of salvation.

That way has ever been the same. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. “Believe, and thou shalt be saved.” They were called to believe much, probably, that they could not fully understand, even as we are; they were to believe and act because God said so. It was Dr. Chalmers, I think, who said that faith is so to believe what God says as to do what God commands. If Adam and Eve did this, they were forgiven and saved. Pardoned, and loving once more their heavenly Father, he would commune with them again, and thus bring back into their lives the peace and happiness which they thought had fled for ever.

This view explains a strange scene of this early history. After God had driven Adam

and Eve out of Paradise, it is said he made them coats of skins and clothed them. Now, where did those skins come from? Were they from animals killed for food? This could not be, for men did not use the flesh of animals for a long time. It was not till after the Flood that God said to Noah, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you." Nor can we suppose that Adam would of himself ever have thought of killing for food these harmless creatures, his companions, which God had brought to him for their very names. But if we understand that God taught Adam and Eve the great truth that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin, and that he taught it, as he taught it afterward, by the solemn rite and act of sacrifice, all is plain. The skins with which they were clothed were the skins of the animals slain as a sacrifice for their sins.

And in thus clothing them did not God teach them another lesson, a lesson of comfort and peace, as if he would hide from his own holy eyes their sinfulness and shame and point them forward to that right-

eousness of the promised Saviour which would cover and protect all his people? So Isaiah's beautiful words would be as true for them as for us: "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." So, too, that dear familiar verse in the Psalms—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"—has a new and sweet meaning for us in the light thus thrown upon it.

Indeed, this one thought is carried through the Bible from its beginning to its close. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—is in it all. More and more the word tells of him, until he comes to the earth, according to his promise, to suffer and die. And when his sufferings are over and he goes back again into heaven, still he is "the Lamb in the midst of the throne," and yet "the Lamb as it had been slain." Rev. v.

At the very opening of our studies, therefore, my dear F——, and before we go out of the garden of Eden, we may sing with full hearts your favorite family hymn, and

so, in some form, could Adam and Eve have sung it:

“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.”

If this was so, how startling is the truth which is shown to us here! The only peaceful access to God for sinners is through a mediator, and there is and ever has been but one Mediator between God and man—He who was the divine man, Christ Jesus. He, therefore, who met Adam and Eve in the garden after their sin and talked with them there, He who told them what their dreadful punishment was to be and pronounced the curse upon Satan, He who told them also of Him who was to be their Deliverer, was probably not God the Father, but God the Son—He who was to be Jesus their Saviour; so that it was of himself he spoke when he said One should come who would bruise the serpent's head.

The beautiful figure of Christ's righteousness covering us as a robe was many years ago impressed on my mind by an incident

in the life of a very dear friend. In the large old-fashioned house in which she lived in S——, Massachusetts, was a room in the third story, to which she was accustomed to retire every evening for a “quiet hour” of prayer. About this time the whole town was startled by a most shocking murder: at midnight and in his sleep an old, peaceable, honored man was brutally killed. It was at the trial of this case that Daniel Webster made one of his great speeches. At the time the whole thing was so mysterious, so awful, that everybody in S—— was appalled and terrified. The people hardly dared go out at night, or even around their own houses in the dark; for houses were not then lighted by gas, as they are now. It may seem strange to you, but it required real courage for a girl, as my friend then was, to leave the family every night and go alone to and from her room.

It is not strange that the danger impressed even the dreams of people. One night my friend dreamed that she had been to her room, as usual, and as she left it to go down stairs she saw that she was stealthily fol-

lowed by some stranger. Soon she was satisfied that it was the worst of all enemies, the wicked one himself. She was terribly frightened, and ran with all her might to escape. Up and down the stairs and from room to room she rushed, conscious that he was still gaining upon her, until she could almost feel the touch of his hand. Suddenly an unseen door opened upon a landing of the stairway, and some one stepped out and threw over her a pure white robe. In an instant the evil one disappeared, and she was safe. The influence of this dream never left her throughout her long life of eighty years. For that white robe seemed to her like the robe of Christ's righteousness which she loved to realize would cover and protect her from all evil. Shown to her in the vision of the night, it became more than ever her own. Beneath it she hid herself, and the sunshine and shade of her life only brought out in clearer relief its glorious beauty.

That corner room held nightly a heavenly Guest, and whole legions of angels would have guarded her way thither, had

it been necessary, as she went to meet her Lord. The words of love there revealed to her made her life a blessing to all about her. Her Saviour's strength made her strong to do and bear; it led her to a life of self-forgetfulness and sacrifice. She sought carefully for the footprints of her dear Lord, and therein she planted her own; and each bud and flower and tree and every event in her daily life was to her a token of his love.

LETTER III.

THE SECOND SACRIFICE.

WHAT we have learned thus far we have been obliged to gather from a few bare hints given us; now, however, we come to something plainer. That which we could only say was highly probable as to the sacrifices offered by Adam and Eve we find clearly brought out in those offered by Cain and Abel. These are the first offerings distinctly mentioned in the Bible.

After our first parents were driven from Eden and had begun their life of toil, two sons, Cain and Abel, were born to them. These also found that their life was to be one of labor. Cain became a tiller of the ground—or a farmer, as we should say—and Abel a shepherd. Then we read in Gen. iv. 3, 4: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the

ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

Perhaps it was the Sabbath-day when Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, for the expression "in process of time" means "at the end of days," and this would most naturally refer to the division of time that God made from the beginning, when he ended his own work in six days and rested on the seventh, and "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Gen. ii. 2, 3. On this day that God had sanctified, or made holy, they would naturally bring their offering as a part of the religious services of the day.

Years must have elapsed since the garden of Eden was shut against Adam and Eve, and the brothers were probably now young men. In reading the story of their offerings perhaps your first thought may be that nothing could be more reasonable than for each

to bring something of his own to the Lord—Cain something from his field, and Abel something from his flock. You cannot understand why God should have made the difference between them, accepting one and rejecting the other, or, if there was to be a difference, why it should not be in favor of Cain's offering rather than that of Abel, which caused suffering and death to an innocent creature.

Let us fix one point: from the moment man sinned there was no forgiveness but by the shedding of blood. This was as true then as it is now. The only question is, How clearly was this truth revealed to the early believers? It is not probable that they were left in utter ignorance of it: God would surely, I think, reveal to them enough for their faith and hope to rest upon. And if we suppose that he made known, even dimly, to Adam and to his sons, this great truth, may we not believe that he did it, as he did clearly afterward, by requiring for acceptable approach to him the offering of a lamb from the flock? If this be true, it explains all.

. As sinners, the only thing for them to bring when they came to worship God was the offering of his own appointment—the type of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This Abel did, and God probably showed his acceptance of his offering then, as he did afterward, by fire from heaven descending and consuming the sacrifice.

Now, the fruits which Cain brought did not represent Christ, especially in the shedding of his blood for sinners, as the sacrifice of the lamb always did; it was, therefore, not the service that God required, and could not be accepted as such. But notice how much there is in the fourth verse of this fourth chapter of Genesis to interest and help us here: “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof.” In these words lie the heart and the substance of all the directions which God ever gave concerning his sacrifices. We feel sure such directions must have been given by God himself. How else could the offerers have known what would be acceptable to him? They, with their parents, were the first who sinned, the first who needed a

Saviour, and the same Teacher who taught the Israelites thousands of years afterward must have taught them. The firstlings were the most valued of all the flock; the fat was the choicest, richest part. God required the best, the most precious, to represent his Son. You will be interested in seeing how strikingly this is taught in Num. xviii. 17; Lev. iii. 14-17; xxvii. 26.

Now, when Cain brought his offering of the fruit of the ground, it was his own way, and not God's appointed way. It showed that he was determined to claim the favor of God as he pleased, not as God required—very much as careless, indifferent sinners do now. So we read that when God reproved him he was very angry, instead of being grieved and penitent for his wrong-doing.

Here, again, we meet with a few words which mean a great deal. God in his great kindness and patience toward Cain told him that it was not too late even then to repent and to remedy the evil. His words are very tender and merciful: "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why

is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." The word "sin" means also a sacrifice for sin, a sin offering, and it seems to me a beautiful explanation of the passage that God here tells Cain not to despair notwithstanding his sin and folly. Even now relief is at hand. The sin offering—probably a lamb that he had before disregarded, and perhaps despised—is now lying at the door; he has only to take it and to offer it as Abel had done, and he should be accepted also.

This agrees with what we find in the New Testament. In Heb. xi. 4 we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." The sacrifice as well as the faith was better, but we can see no reason why the offering of an innocent victim should be better than the offering of the fruits of the ground unless God had commanded the one, and not the other.

The sad ending of this story we all know. Cain refused to do what would have made him as acceptable as Abel, and, being filled with jealousy, he killed his brother. In

punishment for this dreadful crime God cursed his whole life; so that he exclaimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Despair seemed crushing him. He cried out, "Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." How fearful are the consequences of sin, and especially of the sin of unbelief and the rejection of the sacrifice that God has provided for sinners! The sin of Cain, I suppose, is the sin of every one who now despises or neglects the offering of the Lamb of God, and who tries to find acceptance with God in any other way than by the blood of Christ.

We are told very little more of Cain. It is said he went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city. But what could have been that city which was built under the curse of God? His descendants were numerous. They are described as possessing ingenuity and skill in those things which show marked civilization—in music and

the arts, and the cultivation of the earth, perhaps, too, in poetry—yet they were an ungodly and an accursed race. They went out from God, and he left them to find their own way in the world's darkness and gloom.

Both Cain and Abel are several times spoken of in the New Testament, but very differently—Cain as being of that wicked one who slew his brother (1 John iii. 12), Abel as one who “obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Heb. xi. 4.

Is it not clear, then, why Abel's sacrifice was more excellent than Cain's? It was God's appointed way to show faith in the promised Saviour whose suffering life and cruel death were represented by the suffering and death of the lamb. With only a “starlight of Christ” in those far-off times, Abel's sacrifice was offered in faith, and the blood of his sacrifice was acceptable to God as a type of that which was to be shed. But the blood of Christ “speaks better things than that of Abel;” it tells us of a finished redemption, of a completed salvation. It is blood that cleanseth from all sin.

Before closing our study of this the first sacrifice of which there is direct mention in the Bible, it is very interesting to remember that Abel, in dying by the hands of Cain and on account of his faith in the promised Saviour, became the first martyr for Christ. He was the first to enter heaven from this earth—the first trophy of God's redeeming love—and his was the first crown cast at the feet of the "Lamb of God." He was the first to sing the new song unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

"Ten thousand times ten thousand sang
Loud anthems round the throne,
When, lo! one solitary tongue
Began a song unknown—
A song unknown to angels' ears,
A song that told of banished fears,
Of pardoned sins and dried-up tears.

"Not one of all the heavenly host
Could those high notes attain,
But spirits from a distant coast
United in the strain,
Till he who first began the song,
To sing alone not suffered long,
Was mingled with a countless throng.

"But still, as hours are fleeting by,
The angels ever bear

Some newly-ransomed soul on high
To join the chorus there;
And so the song will louder grow
Till all redeemed by Christ below
To that fair land of rapture go."

LETTER IV.

THE SACRIFICE OF NOAH.

MANY hundred years pass away before another sacrifice is mentioned. The only glimpse we have into those long centuries which lie between is in the fifth chapter of Genesis; here we have an account of the birth, age and death of a long line of those who were the descendants of Seth, the son born to Adam and Eve to take the place of Abel. Although this list is long, it is short to fill up a period of sixteen hundred and fifty-six years. You will notice that Adam lived after the birth of Methusaleh about twenty-five years—he was nine hundred and thirty years old when he died—and Methusaleh was Noah's grandfather, and is supposed to have died just before the Flood; so that it did not take the length of two lives to reach from the Creation to the Flood.

Some of those mentioned were godly men. How beautiful is the notice of Enoch and Noah which tells us that they “walked with God”! Perhaps it was harder to live a holy life then than it is even now, but the reward was great. Enoch was taken to heaven without dying. Noah also found grace in the eyes of the Lord; and when terrors and destruction came upon the earth, then “God remembered Noah.”

During this time the world grew worse and worse, until God said, “I will destroy them.” You know the story of the Flood and of Noah’s wonderful faith, which he showed in the face of the scorn and ridicule which for one hundred and twenty years he must have suffered from those about him; for undoubtedly it seemed to them very absurd to see a man building a huge ship at such a distance from the sea. But “by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.”

Historical facts are related to us in the Bible with great brevity and simplicity—often only the barest outlines are given—

but it is very interesting to notice the difference in this account of the Flood: we are told the same thing over and over again; exact dates are given, length of time, and even depth of water. Noah's name is repeated many times—in one place five times in almost as many lines—as if, as some one has said, it were a delight to record so great a faith as his.

But we must hasten on to the one point in the narrative which is of special interest to us. After all was over and the day came in which God said to Noah, "Go forth from the ark," observe thoughtfully the first thing that Noah did. Although in the midst of such fearful desolation as no human eye ever beheld before or since, with no home but the ark and no provision for their wants except what might still remain in it, yet first of all Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl that had been preserved alive with him, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. His faith had not failed in all this perilous time: the first act in his new life was one of grateful worship.

We can picture to ourselves the little group as they stood around that altar, and can imagine something of the thoughts which crowded their hearts. The one hundred and twenty years of waiting and promise are gone. The terrible judgment is accomplished, and this little company of eight persons are all that remain on the earth of the vast numbers which only so short a time before were alive upon it. Standing thus in the midst of such fearful scenes of loneliness and awful solemnity, death and destruction around them everywhere—standing alone with God—they laid their sacrifice upon his altar. The fire descended from heaven and consumed it. At such a moment did they understand that it was this very flame which told them of sins forgiven and of their heavenly Father's anger turned away from them—turned from them, indeed, to be laid in the fullness of time upon another and a greater Victim than that which they had offered?

Just how clearly they realized this we cannot say, but from the first promise in Eden we have no doubt there always were those who believed in a Redeemer to come. Such

believers make the Church of God, and it is the history of the Church that is the history of the Bible.

In the sacrifice of Noah much is added to our knowledge of this service. No doubt God had been revealing to men during these centuries more and more of his thoughts of mercy and of the way in which they might come to him, but here we notice the first distinct mention in the Bible of an *altar* for the sacrifice, and it is the earliest of which there is any record in all history. Probably, however, altars had been in use long before this—even from the very first—for Noah builds one as a matter of course, and it seems as if the mode of worship by sacrifice must always have required it. This ancient altar was probably a very simple thing—a mound of earth or of rough unhewn stone, as, indeed, was the case even at a much later date.

Then, again, we read that Noah took of every clean beast and every clean fowl, and offered a burnt offering unto the Lord. This great distinction is now made among the animals, of the clean and unclean; the clean only were to be used on the altar. After-

ward the same distinction was made in reference to the animals to be used as food.

We meet this expression, "clean and unclean," very often in both the Old and the New Testaments, and always in reference to a separation which is to be made between that which is holy and that which is unholy, or that which may be used in the service of God and that which may not be used.

The teaching of spiritual truth by things seen—or by "object-lessons," as we now say—still continued: men must learn that God is holy and that he requires holiness of them. It was probably to help them in this that the Lord made the distinction between animals, calling some clean and others unclean. For his service he claimed the clean only. Not that in the animals themselves there could be any moral difference, but thus would he teach that that which is offered to a holy God must represent that which is holy; and all that enters into our lives should be pure and good.

Now we see the reason why Noah was directed to preserve alive so many more of the "clean" than of the "unclean" animals:

they would be needed in the service of God as well as for a new supply of the earth. God said to him, "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, and of beasts that are not clean by two."

In our study of Noah's sacrifice there is nothing which is of more interest to us than what is said of God's acceptance of the offering, as mentioned in the twenty-first verse of the eighth chapter of Genesis: "And the Lord smelled a sweet-smelling savor." When the smoke from the burning victim on the altar ascended to heaven, God was satisfied; it was like a sweet odor to him. The service still pointed forward to that greater Victim to be offered for the sins of men, which God would accept as the price of their redemption, and with which he would be satisfied.

As we look upon the beautiful rainbow which, in connection with Noah's sacrifice, God set in the heavens as a sign of his covenant, we remember that God is saying to us as truly as he did to Noah, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter,

and day and night shall not cease." Gen. viii. 22. So the daily blessings under which we live were secured to us when "Noah builded his altar unto the Lord." "For this God is *our* God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." How great and blessed a thing it is if we can say this!

"In the ark the weary dove
Found a welcome resting-place;
Thus my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the Ark of grace.

"Tempest-tossed I long have been,
And the flood increases fast;
Open, Lord, and take me in
Till the storm be overpast."

LETTER V.

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM.

YOU have seen that before the Flood all that was known of the great Deliverer was that he was to be some mysterious descendant of Eve. The head of the serpent—the tempter, the devil—was to be crushed by the woman's child. How truly and only Christ was the child of a woman you know.

Now, however, the promise becomes more definite; it points to the very line in the family of Noah from which the Saviour is to come. Read Gen. ix. 27. You see that Noah, in blessing his two sons, Shem and Japheth, used these words: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Now, if you make the *he* here refer, as it naturally may, to God, not to Japheth, you have a most beautiful and impressive prophecy: God shall enlarge

Japheth, and he (God) shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

Abraham and the Jewish nation were descendants of Shem—so, too, was Christ in his human nature—and the prophecy was fulfilled when God dwelt with Abraham in his tent-life in Canaan, and also when he dwelt in the glory of the Shechinah in the tabernacle or tent in the Wilderness. There is a beautiful reference to this in 1 Chron. xvii. 5. When David wished to build a house for the Lord, God said to him, “I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but I have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another.” But the prophecy was especially fulfilled when God dwelt among men in the person of Christ—in his earthly tabernacle. The very word is used in John i. 14: “He “dwelt (tabernacled) among us, and we beheld his glory.”

It is as wonderful as it is delightful to find such truth in these few words, “God shall dwell in the tents of Shem,” and to see how they pointed the people of those days on to the same hope of a Saviour which has proved

such "glad tidings of great joy" to us. So from the beginning to the end the whole Bible leads to Christ; sooner or later, all ends in him.

It was now about three hundred and fifty years after the Flood. Men had once more become exceedingly wicked; even Abram's family were idolaters. But the God of glory appeared unto Abram and bade him leave his father's house, his kindred and country, and go to a land which he would show him, promising as a reward greatly to bless him there. God did not tell him what this blessing was to be, but that through him "all the families of the earth should be blessed."

It is worth our while to stop here for a moment in grateful thought as we read, "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken." In the story of his life, so simply told, this is all we know of the breaking up of that home in Mesopotamia and his going away with his family into a strange country simply because God had bidden him; but the fulfillment of the promise of reward has never stopped from that day to this, and is still pouring out its unnumbered mercies for man.

This it is which is blessing *our* lives every day and every hour, for in that promise the whole gospel was hidden ; for Paul says that in giving this promise God preached the gospel unto Abraham, and that all Christians now are the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise. Gal. iii. 8, 29. The “good news” of eternal life through Christ in which we rejoice was that in which the patriarch rejoiced ; the Redeemer that we love he loved, for he rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and he saw it and was glad. John viii. 56. So by the word of Jesus himself it would seem that the patriarchs knew much more about Christ, and had a much clearer faith concerning him, than we are apt to believe.

The whole account of Abram’s call seems like that of Paul’s conversion when the great light shone about him and he heard the voice of Jesus calling him, and his obedient cry was, “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” Both lives were afterward spent in witnessing for God among heathen nations ; in some sense, therefore, both were missionary lives, as the lives of all God’s people should be

everywhere. In all lands and all ages they should be witnesses for him.

From Ur of the Chaldees, God led Abram far westward to Canaan. It was no easy journey. Mountains, forests and deserts lay between, and Abram could not tell when and where all this toilsome travel was to end. Simply at the command of God he pitched his tent, and by the same command he traveled on. Thus he passed through the land "unto the place of Sichem." This is a place of marvelous beauty—a lovely valley between the mountains Gerizim and Ebal. Here the journey seemed to end, for here God again appeared unto Abram, telling him that this was the land he had promised to "show" him, but that now he would "give" it unto him and to his children.

The land of Canaan, then, was God's gift to Abram after this journey of faith. If you look on the map of Palestine, you will see that Sichem, or Shechem, is almost in the centre of the land; most appropriate it seems that from this point God should show him the country that was to be his and his descendants' for ever, and that here Abram

should erect his first altar unto the Lord, not only in grateful worship, but as if to consecrate the whole land unto the Giver.

The building of the altar at Shechem is a point of great interest; it is the first mention of the patriarch engaging thus in the public worship of God. And he who in this manner worshiped God also confessed his faith in the promised Saviour. This was a great contrast to the idolatrous worship of his father's house in Chaldea.

Hereafter the chief interest in Abram's history centres about the altars which he builds for the worship of God. As he traveled up and down the land it was not his increasing riches which engrossed him; it is not of these we chiefly read, although he became very rich, but of his new-found God and the glorious promise of the One who was to come. Frequently the only incident mentioned in his halting-places is that "there he builded an altar unto the Lord." Apart from God's altar he seemed to have had neither rest nor home; to it he would return as to his Father's house.

It was not an easy life that Abram led.

The Canaanites were a fierce, quarrelsome people, and, as he would have nothing to do with their idols and idol-worship, we cannot doubt he had to bear their ill-will and jealousy. I imagine it was just as hard for him to sacrifice to the God of heaven before those unbelieving Canaanites as it was for Paul to go from city to city among the worshipers of the false gods of Asia Minor preaching Christ crucified, or as it is for us to be earnest and faithful Christians.

As far as we know, apart from his own family, Abram had none around him but these idolatrous Canaanites, and his life must have been a sad and lonely one if he had not had God's presence and promises to comfort him; these gave him strength and courage, as well as hope for the future. Yet he was a pilgrim and a stranger in a foreign land; this made his meeting with Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 18-20) an event of the greatest interest to him. We know little of this remarkable man; all the references to him in the New Testament make him a very mysterious person. (See Heb. vii.) We wonder to find him a Canaanite, a king, a priest of the most

high God ; yet the fact that he was a priest of the true God makes us sure that Melchizedek and Abram must have had much of common interest and of sweet communion together.

But we must pass rapidly over this scene, as well as over a great portion of Abram's life. There is a special and very tender interest in studying his history as he moves from point to point in Palestine, treading the same paths the blessed Saviour afterward trod, and bearing witness in those far-off days to the hope of his coming.

The altars which Abram reared at Bethel and at Hebron we can only refer to now. The altar at Beersheba has a peculiar interest. It was while Abram was living here that he was called to the most extraordinary experience of his whole life ; never has any one been required to endure such a test of faith and obedience to a command he could not understand. How he must have made God's perfect character his study, to know that even with such a mysterious command he must simply obey ! It was probably while living in the vicinity of Beersheba that his long-promised son Isaac was born.

And never was a son born—except the Son of Mary—with such promises attending his birth. He was the one through whom all greatest blessings were to come to the world, yet God said unto Abraham—whose name had been changed—“Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.”

Can any one read this and not be startled, every added word deepening the anguish it must have caused the amazed father? Yet the command comes from God, Abraham’s loving Friend and heavenly Father; there can be no mistake in it. Abraham knows there is none, for he hesitates no more in obeying this than he did in obeying the first command from the same voice, bidding him rise and leave his home to go he knew not where. Prompt to obey, “he rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.”

Well do we know the story of this sad journey to Moriah, with its joyous ending and the approval the patriarch received from God: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

This trial of Abraham seems to me one of the greatest events, as it is one of the grandest triumphs of faith, in the world's history; I can recall nothing more wonderful or mysterious.

But why should Abraham have been called to such a fearful trial? Was there anything to be learned from thus offering up his own son which could not be learned from offering the lamb in the accustomed sacrifice? Yes, much, I think. Was not one lesson to teach how great the gift of Jesus Christ was to be? To give a lamb for an offering was in itself

a small gift, but for one to lay his own son upon the altar was surely more than to have died himself; and so it seems to me that God would teach that, although he was the great God, King of kings and Lord of lords, with ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands worshiping him in the perfect holiness and bliss of heaven, still he was a *Father*; and when he gave the promise of Christ to die for us, it was the promise of his Son—his *only* Son, his *beloved* Son. In all his vast universe “the most high God, Possessor of heaven and earth,” could find no other ransom for us sinners. “But God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;” and so we may each reverently say to God, as God said to Abraham, “Now I know that thou lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son, from me.”

After this, my dear F——, the wonderful expressions of God’s love to us, scattered all through his word, are explained. How they crowd upon our thoughts!—“I have loved

thee with an everlasting love;" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

"Yes, there it stands, oh love surpassing thought,
So bright, so grand, so clear, so true, so glorious—
Love infinite, love tender, love unsought,
Love changeless, love rejoicing, love victorious,
And this great love for us in boundless store!
God's everlasting love! What would we more?

"Yes, one thing more—to know it ours indeed,
To add the conscious joy of full possession.
Oh tender grace, that stoops to every need!
This everlasting love hath found expression
In loving-kindness which hath gently drawn
The heart that else astray too willingly had gone."

But we must not lose sight of Isaac himself in all these events. His gentle submission to his dreadful fate seems as wonderful as Abraham's faith, especially as we remember that at this time he was a young man, probably of twenty-five or thirty years, and able to understand and to act for himself. But could he have realized that through these experiences he was to become a type of Him whom he came to worship, the Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world?

Again and again during these few days occurred scenes which bring vividly to our thoughts events in the closing week in the life of our Saviour. They are so marked that they surely must have been intended to foreshadow them.

In the way to the mount in the land of Moriah, you remember, Isaac noticed that everything except the lamb was prepared for the service for which they were going. The lamb was not found wild among those mountains; the little creature had its home near the home of man, as it has now. Therefore to Isaac's one wondering question, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering." Isaac says no more; he goes silently on to the awful and mysterious sacrifice. Does not this suggest what is written of Christ? "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Again, notice that Abraham laid upon Isaac the fire and the wood for the altar, and he carried it over the

hills to the place of sacrifice. So of Jesus we read, "And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, . . . where they crucified him."

Then, too, Moriah was probably one of the mountains upon which, many years after, the city of Jerusalem was built, and on which the temple itself stood where was the altar upon which for so many centuries were offered the daily sacrifices which proclaimed faith in the coming Messiah. But Abraham's faith had erected the first altar on that mountain and laid his own son thereon—a type of Him who on Calvary was made an offering for our sins.

But here the resemblance ends. The similitude of the ram which Abraham found caught by its horns is not found in our Saviour's experience: no voice from heaven stayed the hands of those who drove the nails and pierced the side of our Redeemer; no victim was found to take *his* place. His prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," could not be answered unless all God's plan for our salvation were given up. So he adds, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

“This was compassion like a God—
That, though the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.

“Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor let his saints forget.”

LETTER VI.

THE SACRIFICES OF ISAAC AND JACOB.

AMONG the promises to Abraham, you remember, were these—that the land of Canaan should be given to him, and to his children after him, and that his descendants should be as many as the stars of heaven. But it was the chief of all his blessings that among these descendants should be the promised One—the One who should bless all nations, for whose coming the hearts of all the true worshipers of God longed and hoped as they understood more fully the meaning of the promises. These were the promises to which Isaac became heir. (See Gen. xxvii. 2-5.) He received them under the same conditions that Abraham did—“as a sojourner in the land.” This meant a life of daily living by the word of God. Like Abraham, Isaac too, after a divine revelation at Beer-

sheba, built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. The mention of these services is so brief and simple that our attention is hardly drawn to them as solemn acts of worship, and we fail to appreciate all that was meant by them; but there was always the same sacred lesson in them: without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This was the constant story of the dying lamb, the real refrain of the silent worship of the patriarchs, as it is of ours.

Let us hasten on to other thoughts. Have you noticed that in the Hebrew history, until the deliverance from Egypt, it is only in the Promised Land we have this service of sacrifice at the altar? And the deliverance from Egypt is only preparatory to the reoccupation of Canaan. It was not until Abraham arrived in Shechem that we find him building an altar—not before nor on his long journey thither. When the famine drove him into Egypt, no mention is made of his thus worshiping God while there. Neither did he, still later, while at Gerar; but when he came back again to Canaan, he turned his steps at once toward Bethel, his old camp-

ing-ground, where was the altar which he seemed to love more than any other, as if it was his first thought on reaching home once more to seek out the altar of the Lord his God, and there to worship him.

This same fact is noticeable in the history of Isaac. Twice did God appear to him—once in Gerar, a city of the Philistines, and afterward in Beersheba, in the land of Canaan. In both places it seems as if the glory, the blessings and the promises were the same, but only at Beersheba did he build the altar unto God. Was this because it was “the land of promise” and the land of the promised One? Was it because that here He should dwell to whom the sacrifices and the promises referred—because here was the spot where the one great Sacrifice should be offered? This was the only land, the only spot of earth, on which the real Sacrifice for sin was ever to be offered. The Hebrew nation to this day, while banished from this land, offer no sacrifices: they are waiting, for the renewal of the service, their restoration to their own land. This was not brought about by human calculation. Never-

theless, it was a fact in the providence of God—a fact, therefore, in the purpose of God.

We shall find some confirmation of this view in the history of Jacob. You remember how he fled from his home in Beersheba to go to Padan-aram to escape the anger of his brother Esau. On his way he came one night to Bethel, and probably, as he did not reach the place before the sun set and the gates were shut, he slept on the ground, outside the city. God came to him that night in a dream, telling him he would be with him and would keep him wherever he went, and gave to him the same promises he had given to his father and his grandfather. When Jacob awoke, he was afraid, for God had spoken to him. "How dreadful is this place!" he said. "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He must have felt very unworthy of such words of comfort and blessing, coming to him just as he needed them most, and when yet guilty, as he knew himself to be, of such great wrong toward his brother. Yet his heart is melted by them, and he exclaims, If this is so, if God will indeed bless me

and keep me in spite of all my sins, "then shall the Lord be my God."

With all the selfishness that Jacob showed in bargaining for Esau's birthright, he may have been tempted to do so by his desire to secure the promise of having Christ come from his family; this was the blessing that would ordinarily descend to the eldest son. No doubt these brothers had both been taught, as they united in the service at the altar with their father, what were the hopes which it gave them; and when Jacob saw that it was to be the greatest of all God's blessings to the world, he set upon it a value which Esau did not, for Esau, we are told, "despised his birthright." Perhaps God saw this underneath all Jacob's errors, and so appeared to him at Bethel with the blessing of that hour.

Now, I cannot believe that Jacob hesitated to acknowledge his God during his long absence in Chaldea, for his uncle Laban said he knew "by experience that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake." Yet Jacob was just such as we are—weak, timid and sinful—even when he wanted to do right, and probably he did not live up to what he

knew was duty in regard to the true God. Had he done so, his sons might not have proved such men as they did, and his wives might have given up their idols; for even Rachel clung to hers, stealing her father's to carry with her to Canaan.

However these things may be, it is a fact that during the twenty years Jacob lived in Mesopotamia we do not once read of his worshiping God by sacrifice. It is not until his return to the land of his fathers that we find him again rearing an altar to God. He had become a rich man, the divine promise had been fulfilled to him, yet he was fleeing from Padan-aram as hastily and as secretly as he had gone there. Laban pursues him in angry haste, but does not overtake him until he reaches Mount Gilead, which is just within the border-line of the land afterward occupied by the twelve tribes, on the east of Jordan, and included in the land of promise. Here Jacob and Laban settle their quarrel, and Jacob *offers a sacrifice*. This seems a coming back to his old religious life the moment he again enters the Promised Land—a taking up once more the great duty of that

service which belonged to the faith and the worship of his fathers, a renewal of his testimony to the coming Redeemer in whom at last "all Israel shall be saved." This, surely, was more than accidental. It would seem as if God guided him to that service the mystery of whose meaning he could not have fully known, and yet to which he gladly returned.

Jacob's journey to his old home in Canaan is crowded with remarkable incidents, but none of such interest as that of the night at Peniel. He was in deep distress, and had gone thither that he might spend the night in prayer, seeking the protection of God against his brother Esau, who at the head of four hundred men was coming to meet him. Jacob could never have ceased to feel guilty for the wrong he had done his brother, and he was now in great terror. Esau was coming to revenge that wrong. Here, in this lonely valley, the Angel of God, taking the form of a man, met him alone and wrestled with him all the night. Can we understand what is meant by this mysterious wrestling? It is hard to realize that the Angel was the

expected Saviour himself, whose "promise to save" was the one thought of the altar and its sacrifice. This was to be a great crisis in Jacob's life, and the Angel appears that he may help him through it, but in such a way as shall both try him and strengthen him, and then leave him with an infinite blessing.

Jacob wrestled with the Angel till the breaking of the day. Nor, though wounded, would he yield until he had obtained the blessing. And he succeeded. The Angel said to him, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." As a token of this he changes his name from Jacob ("the supplanter") to Israel, which means a "prince of God."

From this time Jacob is a different man, one through whom the God of Abraham and of Isaac could fulfill his great promise made to our first parents and repeated to the patriarchs—the promise on which hung the world's destiny. With the greater blessing he also secured the less for which he had so anxiously sought. We hear no more of the enmity of the two brothers. The meeting

which Jacob so dreaded is one of brotherly love, for "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept."

One of the most beautiful hymns of our language, I think, is that of Charles Wesley upon this event in Jacob's life—his wrestling with the Angel. Let me quote a part of it, if you are not already familiar with it, as I hope you are:

"Come, O thou Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see:
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with thee;
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

"I need not tell thee who I am:
My sin and misery declare;
Thyself hast called me by my name:
Look on thy hands, and read it there;
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

"In vain thou strugglest to get free:
I never will unloose my hold!
Art thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold.
Wrestling, I will not let thee go
Till I thy name, thy nature, know.

“Wilt thou not yet to me reveal
Thy new, unutterable name?
Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell:
To know it now resolved I am.
Wrestling, I will not let thee go
Till I thy name, thy nature, know.

“I know thee, Saviour, who thou art—
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end.
Thy mercies never shall remove:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.”

LETTER VII.

THE SACRIFICES OF ISAAC AND JACOB—CONTINUED.

FROM the night of the wonderful scene at Peniel, Jacob's plans seem changed. Before this he was evidently going toward the south, to Beersheba, where his father, Isaac, still lived, but now he turns toward the west, crossing the river Jordan not far from the place made so memorable by these scenes, and makes his way directly to Shechem.

We need but mention Shechem to see why he turned off his course to go there. How many times do you suppose these brothers had listened to the story from their grandfather Abraham of his journey across the mountains from Mesopotamia, and of the adventures and escapes which befel him, begging to hear of them again and again just as boys would now? And he had told

them also, no doubt, as the greatest blessing secured by that perilous journey, that it rescued him from the dreadful idolatry of his native country and led him to the service of the true God. No doubt, too, he had told them all about his first camping-ground, after he reached Canaan, in the beautiful valley of Shechem, and that it was there he erected his first altar unto the almighty God, and that God appeared unto him and talked with him there.

With the change which has now come over Jacob after the night passed at Peniel, it seems perfectly natural that he should have a strong desire to go himself to the place thus made sacred by the experiences of Abraham. He goes, therefore, to Shechem, and there, as Abraham had done, he builds an altar. He gives it the name of "El-Elohe-Israel"—the mighty One, the God of Israel—a name which has in it the meaning of the whole scene of that eventful night in which he wrestled with the Angel, and which ever after seemed to be the watch-word of his life—"the mighty One" who had made him to have power over the An-

gel, and had turned the heart of Esau from hatred to kindness. Here, in giving a name to his altar, he used for the first time his own new name—"Israel."

Some one has said, "God, in giving Jacob the name of 'Israel,' himself blots out the sins of his past life and gives him a name that makes him a hero." No wonder, then, that he loved to linger about beautiful Shechem and "pitched his tent" there. He afterward buys the field where he had built his altar, and at his death makes it a special gift to his favorite son, Joseph. Here he dug his well—"Jacob's well"—which is seen even now, and on whose edge one day, nearly two thousand years after, the Saviour himself sat weary and thirsty and uttered the wonderful words, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

But the time came when the patriarch must leave this place, with all its tender and sacred associations. God said to him, "Arise,

go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make thee an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” Does not this seem as if God would put him in mind of his Bethel-vows, made more than twenty years before? for in his gratitude for the mercy of that night he had taken the stone which he had used for a pillow, and had set it up and poured oil upon it and said, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God’s house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee”—as if he had said, “This consecrated stone shall stand as a pledge that when I come again to this sacred spot, which has been as the gate of heaven to me, I will build an altar, a sanctuary unto the Lord who answered me in the day of my distress. Here will I offer sacrifice, here with gratitude consecrate my possessions to Him from whom they all come.”

But could it be that during these long years Jacob had been unmindful of these vows, especially since the night at Peniel? Let us not judge him too hardly. Has it never been like this with us? If our lives were written out, would they not have as sad a story to tell of faithlessness and ingratitude?

But, reminded of his forgotten vows, Jacob immediately calls his family together in preparation for leaving Shechem. And now he persuades them to give up their idols, to which they had thus far clung, and he buries them there under an oak. He also requires that each should purify his person and raiment before going to Bethel for this special act of worship, as if their idolatry had defiled them throughout. When they reach the place, he builds the long-promised altar unto the Lord, and there pays his vow. He calls the place "El-Beth-el." You know when he was there at first he gave it the name of "Bethel," but now he adds to it the word *El*, which means "God," and which makes the name read "God, house of God." It is perhaps difficult to see the precise force of this peculiar repetition of names, but it

seems to me to be an added expression of intense adoration and gratitude to God for his great goodness toward him through those long years when he was an exile from his home.

The vow accomplished, God comes to him again and talks with him, perhaps meets him at the altar as the smoke of the sacrifice ascends to heaven, and renews the promises made so long before at the same spot. He calls him also by his new name, "Israel," as if he had given new illustration of its meaning.

From this time we read no more of the errors and the failures in duty that had marked Jacob's past life; we see him henceforth walking humbly with God until his life ends. That life, as we have followed it, was filled with many and great trials. Naturally, I believe, he had more faults than Esau, but he was, after all, a man who feared God, a man of faith and prayer, which Esau was not. Jacob therefore comes out of all his experiences with a character chastened and strong because he had laid hold on the strength of the Almighty. This was the secret of his victory. And those special seasons in which we

have seen him draw near to God at his altar through faith in its sacrifice were simply marked occasions in his life of prayer. We follow him as he moves from one altar to another as by stepping-stones onward and upward toward God. As the beautiful oases in the desert show the presence of some hidden stream or living spring, so these altar-services of the patriarch show the presence of a life that even then was hid with Christ in God.

It is very striking to notice how the history of Jacob seems to have been the study and delight of David. Observe how often he refers to him in the Psalms. At first it seems strange that he should not have taken Abraham, with his wonderful faith and consecrated life, for his example and meditation and praise; but no; guided by the Holy Spirit, he turns and returns to Jacob—sinning and repenting Jacob, so full of human errors and weaknesses that he is even now spoken of by many with contempt. Yet so much did God do for him, so changed did he become in heart and life, that it was *Jacob's* God, Jacob's "mighty God"—El-Elohe-Israel

—whom David sought for himself. For no doubt he felt, as we may feel, that Jacob's history was one that came nearer to himself than Abraham's. With like weaknesses and sins, he could hope for like strength and victory, and so he sings again and again, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help;" "I will sing praises to the God of Jacob." And when he wants to tell God's people where they must turn in their sorest trials, his repeated testimony is, "The God of Jacob is our Refuge." Should not all this teach us not to pass a judgment upon God's people that he does not pass? In condemning Jacob let us see to it that we do not condemn the judgment of God himself.

Once more only do we read of Jacob's offering a sacrifice unto the Lord: it is when he is taking final leave of Canaan and going down into Egypt with his whole family to escape the terrible famine and to meet his long-lost son Joseph. He knows that he shall probably never return again. All will be strangely new to him in Egypt, and he knows not what will befall him there. He is old and timid. But just before he passes

out of the land of promise, at its farthest bounds, he turns aside a little and goes back to Beersheba, his old home, the home of his boyhood, from which he had fled so many years before, the home of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, where God had so often met them and blessed them, and where in sight of the ungodly and idolatrous nations they had built their altars unto him as the only true God. How natural and beautiful it was that he should go to this endeared spot once more to worship God there—to offer, perhaps on the very altar of his childhood, those sacrifices which showed that his hope for the continued blessing and guidance of his heavenly Father was still anchored to this Rock, the promise of the coming of the blessed One.

Thus drawing near to God, God also draws near to Jacob with words of wonderful favor and promise. The account is too beautiful to be omitted: “Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob,

Jacob! And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." Gen. xlv. 1-4.

Strengthened with these marvelous promises, he goes on to meet those untried experiences which he may well have dreaded so much, and to find his God a faithful Promiser to the end.

Here, for the present, all mention of the worship of God by the altar and the sacrifice ceases; hundreds of years pass in silence on this subject. Jacob dies in Egypt, triumphant in the faith of his fathers, leaving in his final blessings to his sons a line of prophetic promises reaching on to the coming of Him in whom he believed—Christ, the promised Saviour, the Shiloh, the Peacemaker between God and man. Gen. xlix. 10.

LETTER VIII.

*THE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSOVER.—PRELIMINARY EVENTS.**

THE circumstances in which we shall find the descendants of Jacob in our present study are very different from those that surrounded them as we followed them from one camping-ground to another in the land of Palestine. They were then a prosperous and wealthy clan of about seventy persons under the special guidance and favor of God. Two hundred and fifteen years have gone; every one is dead who knew about them when they first came with their father Jacob from Canaan to Egypt. Then the king of Egypt was their friend. They were greatly honored and prospered. Their brother Joseph was the king's favorite, and had been made

* For various historical, geographical and archæological facts in these letters the writer would acknowledge her obligations to Robinson, Rawlinson, Palmer and Geikie, and for some practical suggestions to Bush and Bonar.

the grand vizier, or the prime minister, second only to the king. But now even Joseph is forgotten, or only remembered, perhaps, by some legend or inscription on the temple-walls. And they are a hated and despised race, poor and held as slaves by the cruel tyrant-kings who rule over Egypt and persecute them beyond endurance. In their prosperous days, you remember, they had been shepherds, and perhaps this was one reason why, when they first came into Egypt, they had been so kindly treated, for the king of Egypt at that time is supposed to have been one of the famous line of shepherd-kings who ruled there for five hundred years. These "kings," with their followers, had themselves been driven from their own country, Chaldea or Syria, by a conquering people coming from a region still farther east, and had settled in great numbers in Egypt. Here they had risen and overthrown the government of Egypt, and planted themselves upon its throne. They had been a wandering people, living the same tent-life that the patriarchs had lived. The native Egyptians, however, called them

“shepherds” in derision, and ever after seem to have hated all shepherds. This, I say, may in part explain the kindness which Joseph and his brethren had received, and why they were so cruelly treated afterward by the Egyptian kings when these had again secured the throne of Egypt.

The history of Egypt at this time throws a strong light on our subject and enables us to enter into the spirit of God’s command to his people to go into the wilderness and *sacrifice* again unto him. It gives us a vivid appreciation of the truth that the only way for them to enjoy the full favor of God once more was by coming back to his worship at the altar, which for so many years had been neglected.

At this time Egypt was at the height of her civilization—the greatest that had ever been known, and surprising even to us at this remote time; we wonder when we read of her astonishing knowledge of science and her skill in the arts. Unfortunately, much of this has been lost to us, though even now among the ruins of this desolated country we see marvels in architecture and design

which we can only imitate, but cannot reproduce. Her kings from the earliest reigns had an ambition for building immense temples, obelisks, pyramids, canals, and some of them were probably in existence when Abraham and Isaac went down into Egypt. But Rameses II., who reigned about the time of which we are now studying, exceeded all who had gone before him in his great public works; most of the vast ruins which now cover the land bear his name. They are sad, desolate ruins, and they show not only the grand thoughts of the architects, but the inconceivable labor and the bitter misery which such toil must have involved.

Very little machinery had been invented at this time, and for these stupendous works thousands and hundreds of thousands of slaves were forced to toil. These slaves were drawn from every quarter, and constituted far the greater portion of the population. All but the higher castes of the people were slaves; their prisoners of war were all doomed to this living death, and into the sad catalogue our poor Hebrews were forced to go. It is painful to read of the constant, pitiless

labor exacted of them. In the burning mines of Arabia and Libya, on the scorching river-banks—where they were forced to dip water in buckets from the Nile to feed the innumerable canals that were spread over the country—in the terrible brick-fields; chained together like beasts, dragging huge blocks of granite and limestone from the quarries and placing them on their lofty buildings high in the air, simply by their own unaided strength—all this with no pay, with the worst of food, and with no covering for their bodies even to protect them from the fiery sun of the equator,—such was their condition. Then there was the dreaded taskmaster's constant oversight, beating and goading them on with the terrible rod when sinking under their burdens. Such were the facts of the time, as the lasting records show. The history of the country and the acts of its kings are cut into the very stone of the temples and the rock of the tombs. So terrible were the persecutions of *Ramesses II.* against the Hebrews that he has well been called “the Pharaoh of the oppression.”

“But it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died.” For sixty-seven years he had carried on his inhuman treatment of the children of Israel. Sixty-seven years out of the two hundred and fifteen years of their bondage were spent under his cruel tyranny. How long their prosperous days on Joseph’s account lasted is not known, but through the greater part of their residence in Egypt they were slaves.

Human life was nothing to those selfish, merciless, ambitious kings; one hundred and twenty thousand miserable slaves perished in building a single canal, and thirty thousand in building another. No wonder this was so, when they dug with their hands only, with no tools nor any of the modern instruments with which to remove the earth.

It was from lives such as these that the bitter cry went up to God, and for them this compassionate answer came back: “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of the taskmasters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.”

Though their sufferings were so great, yet the record, as usual, is very brief. The building of the treasure-cities, Pithom and Rameses, and the making of bricks, are the only things that are specially mentioned in the history ; and therefore I think there must have been something in these works more than usually distressing. These cities were built close to the Arabian desert. They were vast storehouses where were deposited the food for the hosts of slaves and the ammunition for the king's army. They were fortresses, also, to guard this eastern frontier of the land. They were built chiefly of brick. The life of incessant toil exacted of the slaves employed in the brickfields which furnished the bricks for these cities must have been one of torture, for added to all the rest here was the sting of the hornet driven in from the desert by the burning winds. The cruel taskmaster, too, was ever on the watch to prevent any moment of rest.

Mounds have lately been opened in the locality where these cities stood, and the very bricks with which they were built have been found. These were made from the

Nile mud, some with straw, and some without, and bearing the stamp of Rameses II.*

But, thrilling as is the story of the bit-

* It is an interesting fact that the mummy of this king, Rameses II., has recently been discovered in a secret cavern at Dayr-el-Behari, Egypt. This had probably been hidden away by the priests in a time of danger. In the presence of the khedive of Egypt, his ministers and other prominent men, the body was unwrapped after its long sleep of three thousand years, and before them lay "the Pharaoh of the oppression." "The head is long, and small in proportion to the body, the top of the skull quite bare, on the temples a few sparse hairs but at the poll the hair is quite thick, forming smooth straight locks. . . . The forehead is low and narrow, the brow-ridge prominent; the eyebrows are thick and white; the eyes are small and close together. The temples are sunken, the cheek-bones very prominent, the ears round, standing far out from the head and pierced like those of a woman for the wearing of earrings. The jawbone is massive and strong, the chin very prominent, the mouth small, but thick-lipped, and . . . disclosed some much worn and very brittle teeth, which, moreover, are white and well preserved. The moustache and beard are thin, the skin is of earthy-brown splotched with black. Finally, it may be said, the face of the mummy gives a fair idea of the face of the living king. The expression is intellectual, perhaps slightly animal, but even under the somewhat grotesque disguise of mummification there is plainly to be seen an air of sovereign majesty, of resolve and pride. The rest of the body is as well preserved as the head. . . . The chest is broad, the shoulders are square, the arms are crossed upon the breast, the hands are small. . . . The corpse is that of an old man, but of that of a vigorous and robust old man. We know, indeed, that Rameses II. reigned for sixty-seven years, and that he must have been nearly one hundred years old when he died."

ter lives of the Hebrews, it is not so sad as that of the dreadful idolatry into which as a nation they fell. They, the people of the true God, a people who had been compassed by his constant favor and taught by his own voice and guided by his own presence,—that they should forget him and actually worship the hideous beast-gods of the Egyptians seems worse than all else in their lives of misery. If they were without hope, it was because they were without God.

Nothing I have ever read of the idolatry of any other people is so revolting as that of the Egyptians. It is true their great national divinity was their sun-god, Ra, but with him were so many inferior gods that it was impossible to remember even their names. This seems bad enough, but, added to these gods of comparatively higher character, there were certain birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, and even vegetables, that were supposed to represent gods, and, as is always the case in such circumstances, these also were worshiped. With these the whole land was polluted; for these, magnificent temples were built, and were dedicated for their residence and service. The

cat, the crocodile, and even the serpent, were objects of this honor and worship.

Dreadful it is to be *born* to a religion like this, but to *turn* to it from such a God as Jehovah of the Hebrews is strange beyond expression. It was to such idolatry as this that they were exposed, and into which they fell. From this they must be delivered.

It would seem that their early prosperity had provoked the jealousy and fear of the king, and he determined to find some way to end it. Moses gives an account of one of the king's conferences with his ministers over the subject. "Behold," said Pharaoh to them, "the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on; let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Ex. i. 9, 10.

Just as God had promised, this people had become "a multitude." There were only seventy of them when they first settled in Egypt; now there were probably over two millions. From their experience with the shepherd-

kings, the rulers of Egypt might well be afraid to allow such a host of foreigners from nearly the same region again to overrun their land; "for the land was filled with them." Neither could the present king allow them to go out of the land, for he had too many ambitious plans to permit such a loss among his best and hardiest workmen. "Therefore did they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." The king also gave commandment that every new-born man-child should be taken from its poor mother at once and killed. This seemed worse than all he had yet done to them, and was enough to break the spirit of the strongest and most hopeful among them.

We must not forget that these afflictions had been foretold long before. When Abraham first came into Egypt, before Isaac was born, God, who sees the end from the beginning, said to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them, four hundred years,

and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Gen. xv. 13, 14. They were to be strangers four hundred years, part of the time in Canaan (which was not yet fully theirs) and part in Egypt, where they were to be afflicted and in bondage. God knew how attached they would become to idolatrous Egypt—how hard it would be for them to leave it; through bitter experiences they must be made willing to go out from it all, and to come back to him and his service. This seems to me the real reason of their afflictions—to lead them out of Egypt and back to God. Is not such often the meaning of affliction now?

The prophecy of their sufferings must have been known to Jacob, and it may be it was the remembrance of it that made him shrink from going into "the strange land" and turned him back, just as he was leaving Canaan, to inquire once more of the Lord at the altar of Beersheba if he should go on.

Unconsciously, the children of Israel had themselves been working out this prophecy. But now the measure of their suffering was

almost full; the time of their triumph and deliverance drew nigh. Yet, having forgotten God, no wonder they felt that he had forgotten them. But was it so? Forgotten? Not for a day! "For it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years" from the time of the promise to Abraham, "even *the selfsame day*, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt." Not one day more—not one day less.

The story of this deliverance you know. Amid the general degradation of the people and the influence of the Egyptian idolatry some, no doubt, remained true to the God of their fathers; of such a household was Moses born. He was one of the children ordered by the king to be killed at birth. In the strangest way, by the wonderful providence of God, he was saved by the king's own daughter. He was brought up as her child, educated in all the learning of the Egyptians—then the highest in the world—and was destined, Josephus says, to be the heir of the throne if the princess should have no son. At all events, there was everything in this world to delight and to satisfy him as an adopted

prince of Egypt; but he knew the story of his fathers, he remembered his brethren. He made an effort to deliver them and failed—for God's time had not yet come—and then left the royal palace and "the pleasures of Egypt" for ever. He fled to the southern part of Arabia, where for forty years he lived among the Midianites as a simple shepherd.

LETTER IX.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSOVER.

THE hour for the fulfillment of the promise of God was at hand.

At one time, we are told, Moses led his flock to the back side of the desert, "even to Horeb." Here, in this lonely, rocky spot, out of the midst of a burning bush, God calls to him and bids him go and gather together his suffering people, and lead them out of the land of their bondage back to the home of their fathers. He sends word to them that he is the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He tells them he knows their sorrows, he has heard their bitter cries, and now the time has come when he will deliver them from their oppressors. For this he bids them make the strange request that they may go three days' journey into the wilder-

ness to *sacrifice* once more unto the Lord their God.

How full of tenderness is the message he sends to them! No word of reproof for those centuries of idolatry and forgetfulness of him; only an invitation to come back to him. Still he calls them "my people;" still he says, "Israel is my son, my first-born." Truly,—

"this love looks mighty,
But 'tis mightier than it seems,
* * * * *
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

While God is thus talking with Moses from the burning bush, Moses asks by what name he shall speak of him to his people. You see what a perfectly natural question this is. They would want to know the name of his God, for each of the countless false gods of the Egyptians had his own name. Many of these the Hebrews knew, but could they have forgotten the name of their own God? And God said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say

unto the children of Israel : I AM hath sent me unto you."

We cannot appreciate the full meaning of this strange message unless we understand what it meant to call this erring people again to the altar and the sacrifice of the Lord. The mysterious name by which God calls himself, by which he would have them know him, speaks of mercy to them, and seems to assure them that the dreadful past is all forgotten because he is their God, the same that *he has ever been*—the eternal, unchanging God : "I AM THAT I AM." It brings to our minds what is said of our Saviour himself : "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And the message itself is like the loving appeal from those very lips hundreds of years afterward : "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And now God's commands came with fearful persistency upon the king : "Let my people go that they may serve me."—"But who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" was the king's blasphemous answer, as he also persisted in refusing his

consent, although each refusal was followed by such a terrible judgment; for God did smite the land with great plagues until it was wellnigh destroyed—this beautiful land of Egypt, the pride of Pharaoh's heart. His degradation was complete, for he was the incarnation of the great Egyptian sun-god, Ra, and was himself worshiped as a god. But against all the gods of Egypt the Lord executed judgment. Ex. xii. 12.

Yet the king's avaricious and stubborn heart held out until the final blow came which broke his fierce will. He awoke one night to find his eldest son, the heir to his throne, dead, and a wail going up through the length and breadth of his dominion, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And with them was the first-born of the beast-gods asleep on their velvet cushions in their gorgeous temples and palaces. Even Pharaoh could hold out no longer, and his consent was wrung out of his granite heart: "And he called for

Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds as ye have said, and be gone, and bless me also." Now indeed Pharaoh answers his own blasphemous question, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" He had found to his cost that he could not contend with the Hebrews' God. And for the Hebrews themselves, how they must have been startled back into acknowledging this "Lord" to be *the* God and *their* God!

Through this time of fearful wrath the children of Israel were guarded by a watchful Providence; the bow of God's promises of mercy spanned this period of appalling judgment. Their crops remained to them unharmed by the hail; their cattle were saved alive; when there was darkness over all the land—"darkness which could be felt"—there was light in their dwellings. For God had said, "Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how

that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

But when it came to this—the final judgment, the death of the first-born—there was a great difference in the manner of the Hebrews' escape. From the earlier plagues they had been delivered, so far as we can see, simply because God chose to deliver them, but now it was to be in part a matter of their own decision whether there was to be a like contrast between them and the Egyptians. Having protected them from all the terrible evils which had been about them, God would now put their faith in him to a test which, because it was so simple, would so much the more show their confidence in him as their Protector. This has ever been God's way. The cry of Naaman the Syrian has been the echo of all hearts: "If God would only require some great thing of us!" But a trifling thing done simply because God has said so is often a hundredfold harder.

So now every family was required to provide itself with a lamb without blemish, and to kill it before sunset on a certain day; to take in a basin the blood of the lamb and with

a bunch of hyssop sprinkle the two posts and top of the door of their own house. After this was done none must go out of the door of his house until the next morning; for when God warned them that he should add yet another to the plagues he had already sent upon the land, and that this would come into the homes of the people and would strike the eldest born throughout the land, he said, "But the blood shall be to you for a token where ye are, and when I see the blood I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be upon you when I smite the land of Egypt." It was a simple way of escape, but it was enough; for as the angel with his dread commission passed through the land, wherever the blood could be seen upon the door that house was safe: the angel "passed over" it, and smote it not.

Hastily gathering up what they had before prepared to take whenever the time should come—strange to say, there were no feeble folk among these millions—all the families, with their flocks and herds of cattle, moved toward the rallying-point; and here, as soon as they could be arranged with some-

thing like order according to their tribes, they started forth—not less, probably, than two million five hundred thousand in number—upon that journey which has no parallel in human history. In all their haste lest the king should again change his mind, still they had time to act carefully, for as yet Pharaoh was too much absorbed in his own grief and in the protracted ceremonies which attended the death and burial of the prince to care what became of these hated people; and when he did follow after, God himself stood between him and them. This night of their escape was one never to be forgotten by them or their children. God said, “This day shall be unto you a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations for ever. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover.” The month Abib, in which it occurred, was to be thenceforth “the beginning of months,” the first month of the year. There must have been something very remarkable in all this, that it should be

called "the sacrifice of the Lord's passover;" and still more, it seems to me, when God himself claims it as peculiarly "my sacrifice."

You will perhaps ask, "How was the killing of the lamb and the sprinkling of its blood on the doorposts a sacrifice? for there was no altar, no fire to consume the sacrifice." But it was a life given in place of another's life; it was slaying an innocent victim to save one exposed to death; and this has ever been the central thought of all sacrifice offered to God. That one should die for another is the grandest thought that any one is capable of receiving. Christ was the Author of it, his life ever taught it, his death realized it, and he has always been the most blessed who has learned this lesson most fully.

The Hebrews were directed not only to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the posts of their houses, but to roast the lamb with fire. In this way was represented the burning of the victim of the sacrifice. There was in Egypt no common altar around which the people could gather as their fathers had done. We never read of an altar being raised to the

true God in this land of darkness ; therefore now each house was an altar, and the fire in each house an altar-fire. To complete the service they were to eat the lamb, each family by itself, and in doing so they would show their faith in God's message to them. They must eat in haste, standing and in complete readiness as for a journey, their sandals on their feet and their staves in their hands, their girdles bound round them ready for their flight from the house of bondage.

It was to take centuries to unfold the full truth of this scene. The few who had been faithful to their God through these sad years probably caught something of its meaning ; so in faith they obeyed, and received the blessing.

This passover service came to the people, in the midst of their appalling gloom and discouragement, as a gleam of sunlight breaking through the black storm-clouds of hopelessness and despair ; and it became to them ever after a beacon-light which guided them on toward a clearer knowledge of and a fuller faith in the promised Saviour—the true paschal Lamb. We are glad that

once at least in Egypt an offering should ascend to heaven as a type of Him to whom at last shall ascend the song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Rev. v. 9.

"Where the paschal blood is poured,
Death's dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go
Through the wave that drowns the foe.
Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed—
Paschal Victim, paschal Bread;
With sincerity and love
Eat we Manna from above.

"Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce powers beneath thee lie;
Thou hast conquered in the fight,
Thou hast brought us life and light.
Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
Thou hast opened Paradise,
And in thee thy saints shall rise."

LETTER X.

THE ALTARS AT REPHIDIM.

THE goal of the Hebrews on leaving Egypt was the land of promise—Canaan, their fathers' home. It must, therefore, have been a great disappointment to them, worn and weary with their long servitude, not to have taken the direct northern road from Egypt to Canaan, which was shorter and easier than any other. But in taking that road they must have passed through the country of the Amalekites and the Philistines, who dwelt in the southern part of Canaan. These were a cruel, warlike people who would have opposed them at once, and destroyed them if possible.

It is true there were six hundred thousand men among the Hebrews able to fight, but they had been slaves all their lives, kept down by oppression, and had never learned

war, and would have been unprepared to resist such an enemy; and if they could have fought for themselves, remember the host of old and young, and all their flocks and herds and wagons and baggage, which they must take with them through the enemy's country. If they could but have learned at the outset of their journey the grand lesson that their God could make no mistake as he led them along, it would have saved them many a murmuring and many a sorrow.

God had wise reasons for bidding Moses to lead the people to Mount Horeb, in the southern part of the peninsula of Arabia: it was there, he told him, that they should offer the sacrifices for which they had left the land of Egypt. To the south, therefore, they turned, instead of to the north, crossing the Red Sea, where God made a way for them through the waters and delivered them from the king of Egypt and his army; for Pharaoh was soon in pursuit of them to arrest their flight. In the darkness of the night the hosts of God's people went through the sea; and when the morning

light came the dreaded army lay dead all scattered along the shore :

“Forward let thy people go :
Israel’s God will have it so.
Though thy path be through the sea,
Israel, what is that to thee?
He who bids thee pass the waters
Will be with his sons and daughters.”

Surely now they could trust their God, and they thought they did, and shouted in their joy, “I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. He is my God. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” This is that “song of Moses” which, with “the song of the Lamb,” the final victors sing. Rev. xv. 3, 4.

After this deliverance the people kept on their way toward the south, along the western coast of Arabia, between the sea and the mountains. It is the same caravan-path that is used now. At first all seemed prosperous ; food and water were easily obtained, and carried from place to place in their wa-

ter-skins. But soon the track led through the terrible deserts of Shur and Sin, where both food and water failed and their supplies which they had carried with them were exhausted. Here their courage and faith gave way, and in their murmurings they "spake against God," forgetting the wonders he had wrought for them. "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, yea, many a time turned he his anger away."

A modern traveler describes his experience of a day near the track passed over by the Israelites: "At dawn it is mild and balmy as an Italian spring, and inconceivably lovely in the colors it sheds on earth, air and sky; but presently the sun bursts up from the sea, a fierce enemy that will force every one to crouch before him. For two hours his rays are endurable, but after that they become a fiery ordeal. The morning beams oppress you with a feeling of sickness; their steady glow blinds your eyes, blisters your skin and parches your mouth, till you have only one thought—when evening is to come. At noon the heat, reverberated by the glowing hills, is like the blast of a lime-kiln.

The wind sleeps on the reeking shore ; the sky is dead white. Men are not so much sleeping as half senseless. They feel as if a few more degrees of heat would be death.”*

In parts of their journey the Hebrews doubtless encountered just the hardships here described. Terrific heat like this, empty water-skins, the only spring to which they came salt and bitter, can we wonder that they were discouraged “because of the way”? It was to take a long time before they could trust God in adversity. But their Guide in the cloudy pillar never left them, and in his own right time he brought waters even from the rocks for their relief and still led them on safely. After they turned from the fiery desert-plains of the coast in among the mountains on their way to Horeb, still it was hard, painful work ; here they must follow the dry course of the wadys in their ascent of the mountains. Wadys are beds of the mountain-streams, dry except in time of rain ; they still form the highway of travelers in these desolate regions. “And they took their journey out of the wilderness of

* Burton.

Sin, and encamped in Dophkah." Dophkah is known to modern travelers by the name of Wady Maghara, and, except from the effects of storm and nature's wear, that desolate region must appear to us at this day much as it did to the Hebrews more than three thousand years ago. It is a wide valley with mighty walls of rock on both sides—not such mountains as we are accustomed to, but hard, desolate, barren cliffs and perpendicular walls of naked rock, of vast height, with most brilliant coloring, yet with hardly a trace of verdure. These walls of rock reflect and greatly intensify the heat, and become almost scorching to the touch.

Into this Wady Maghara, or "Dophkah," growing more and more fearful in its desolation and wildness as it made its course into the heart of the mountains, the Hebrews now turned. "The road they had passed had been terrible, but that which now opened before them must have looked like the valley of death." Yet here, among the terrors of these mountains, lay, I think, such a glad surprise for them that the past might be almost forgotten. Let me explain.

This Wady Dophkah led to a region where were very valuable mines of copper and turquoise; these mines had been worked for centuries before the Hebrews entered the valley, and they were still unexhausted. Inscriptions yet remain showing the vast age of these works. They belonged to Egypt, and, it is said, were to the Egyptians what the mines of Siberia are to the Russians—a place of terrible and dreaded exile. The miners were drawn from all quarters—prisoners of war, persons wrongfully condemned, noblemen as well as slaves; and frequently not only the offender himself was dragged away into this hopeless banishment, but with him were his entire family and connexions. The life these wretched miners led is almost beyond belief; once entombed in the mines, death itself was their only relief. Added to the tropical heat of the climate, the mines themselves were heated by immense fires to loosen the rock, and here these poor creatures were chained together and kept at constant hard work, with no opportunity for rest, even by night. Young and old, sick and feeble, women and children,—none were allowed to

escape this dreadful fate. Here, too, was always the merciless "overseer" to drive them on to their work with cruel blows. To guard the mines and prevent all hope of escape, bands of foreign soldiers with foreign speech were kept constantly on duty. Thus no wrong could be righted, as no complaint could be understood. Among these unfortunate beings there must have been great numbers of Hebrews; perhaps hardly a family but was represented there.

Now, in passing up this Wady Maghara the children of Israel must pass by these mines. Forty years Moses had lived among these very mountains, and every part was familiar ground to him. Undoubtedly he knew of these mines and something of their awful cruelties. Indeed, after his slaying of the Egyptian and his own escape from Egypt, it is not improbable that some of his own family and friends may have been banished to this living death.

It adds greatly to our interest in this journey if we may suppose—as is surely not unlikely—that these captives were set free by Moses and his host. The military guard

at the mines is said to have numbered about seven hundred and forty men—a very small force to be met and overcome by the army of Moses. What a joy, then, to claim these lost ones for liberty, to break the irons from their worn and weary feet and to bring them back once more to the light of day, to friends and to freedom!

Strange to say, the surrounding rocks themselves seem to tell this very story. Even now can be seen inscriptions which show that these mines were in full operation up to the time of Rameses II., “the oppressor,” but none to indicate that they were worked after that reign which saw the flight of the Hebrews. The works came, apparently, to a sudden stop. This is a wonderful fact. The treasures of the mines were still unexhausted—the gold and the precious stones; even the machinery, as we may suppose it was then left, is still to be seen. Thus, as in so many other places, God has made the record of the rocks to confirm his word.

Following the Hebrews in their wanderings, we soon find them engaged in their

first battle—with the Amalekites. This people were an old race of Bedouin Arabs who lived chiefly in the northern portions of the peninsula of Arabia. It was their custom during the hot, dry months of the year to migrate toward the south, to the high lands of the mountains. They were encamped at this time at Rephidim. When the Hebrews wanted to pass through this valley on their way to Horeb, the Amalekites rose in battle against them, making a most cowardly attack upon them from the rear. The Hebrews were wellnigh exhausted; the dreadful heat and the want of water had told sadly upon them. For two days their water-skins had been empty, and they had no way to refill them, until God brought for them water from the rocks. It was at such a time that the enemy met them by the way and smote the hindermost of them, even all that were feeble, when they were faint and weary. But their assailants had bitter cause to repent their cruelty, for they were overthrown, and the remembrance of them was finally blotted out from under heaven.

It is at this time that we first read that

“Moses built an altar.” He called the name of it “Jehovah-Nissi”—“The Lord my Banner.” All Israel must have seen that when everything looked dark God had given them deliverance and victory; yet the chief reason, perhaps, why Moses at this time raised this altar was in recognition of the fulfillment of God’s promise made here at the burning bush in Horeb, where they were now gathered: “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee: When thou hast brought the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. I AM THAT I AM.” Here Moses now stood, and the people with him.

This is also the first time an altar has been mentioned since Jacob, on going into Egypt, centuries before, turned back to worship for the last time at the old family altar at Beersheba. The record is very brief for an event so momentous, but this is the manner of the Scriptures.

Here too occurred an incident very different from the others, but very beautiful. They were now near Moses’ old home in Midian. While living here he had married

the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian ; but when he went back to Egypt to deliver his brethren, he had left his wife and his two sons behind him with her father. Hearing now of his approach, Jethro brought these out to meet him. The scene of their meeting is too exquisite in its Oriental beauty to abbreviate : “ And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God : and he said unto Moses, I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him ; and they asked each other of their welfare ; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who

hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." Ex. xviii. 5-12.

Here you can trace the whole service of the burnt offering in this sacrifice of the Midianite priest, even to the endearing fellowship expressed by the family gathering to partake of the parts of the sacrifice not consumed upon the altar. And it seems most natural, also, that Jethro should use the same altar Moses had just raised, and in so doing—all-unconsciously, perhaps—foretell the time when Jew and Gentile should together unite in the faith and the worship of "the Lamb that was slain."

LETTER XI.

THE ALTAR AT SINAI.

By the road the Israelites had taken it was one hundred and fifty miles from the crossing at the Red Sea to the mountain to which, after a march of six weeks, they came. There is a feeling of rest even to ourselves when this weary journey ends and they pitch their tents before Sinai, at the mount of God. To this lonely desert-spot, far up among these mountains, five thousand feet above the level of the sea, did God lead the children of Israel that they might be alone with him, away from all that would remind them of their evil Egyptian life, that here they might sacrifice unto the Lord their God, and that he himself might be their Teacher and Guide into a life wholly new. To realize how much even the best of them must have needed instruction, we have but to remember

what they had been in Egypt only a few months before. Moses' shepherd-life with Jethro among these mountains and valleys had given him just the experience he now required. The course of every spring of water, and every green spot of grass he had learned as he led about his flocks for pasture. Now he could guide to the same places this mighty flock of God's people as they sought food and drink for themselves and their cattle. Here, under the shadow of these lofty mountain-peaks, they remained for nearly eleven months, sustained by God's own care. Every morning and every evening fresh manna fell around their camp, and springs of water were near, and their clothes "waxed not old."

Mount Horeb was probably a cluster of mountains of which Sinai was a peak. In a plain which came close to the very base of the sacred mountain, and in its shadow, the Hebrew tents were now pitched. Its stupendous cliffs rose directly before them, a wall of granite rock from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred feet high, rising to a still sublimer height as they receded

toward the south, a splintered mass of bare rock eight thousand or nine thousand feet above the sea. Yet, although no vegetation is seen upon these mountains, the colors of the rocks are such that "they seem to be veiled in a rich and varied world of plant-life." "The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, through a framework of gigantic mountains, had been itself a fitting preparation for the coming scene. . . . From every point the wall of rock rose into the sky, in its lonely grandeur like a huge altar, in front of the whole congregation—an awful throne from which the voice of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the great plain below."

The pillar of cloud which had gone before the Israelites all the way now rested on the top of Mount Sinai, and, from the midst of the cloud, God, having called Moses to meet him there, sent this message to his people: "Tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,

then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." And all the people answered and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." It was probably not more than two months before this that they were worshiping the hideous idols of Egypt. Surely God had not dealt so with any nation. Now he had said to Moses that he would come down on Sinai in the sight of all the people, and that they should hear his voice as he talked with them. They were to make special preparation to meet him at his coming. Travel-worn and soiled after their long, hot journey, they could have been in no condition to appear before an earthly monarch, much less before the King of kings. But something more was intended than that they should cleanse themselves from the dust and soil of their journey: they must "sanctify" their hearts and their thoughts as well.

And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that the Lord came down on the top of Sinai, attended by myriads of

angels. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2. "And there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled: and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Then Moses brought the terrified people out of the camp, and they stood under the mountain while it burned with fire unto the midst of heaven. And "the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder," and through the hush and silence that followed that awful moment came the voice: "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Such were the circumstances under which God gave to them his holy law, the ten commandments. But as the people gazed upon the fearful sight of the flaming mountain they fled in terror, and, standing afar off, cried unto Moses, "Speak thou with us and

we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die."

These commandments were God's covenant with his people; if they kept these laws, they would be blessed in this life and in the life to come. And the people answered, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." But what if they did not keep them? Was it true that the soul that sinned should die? Yes. And was there no escape? Read on, and we shall learn that the compassion of God was as great and as tender as his majesty was awful and overwhelming. "Oh that there was such an heart in them," he said to Moses, "that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" Deut. v. 29.

This law having been given, this covenant established, God called Moses into the cloud again, yet not, as before, that he might listen to a "fiery law," but that he might be the bearer of this message of comfort to his terrified people: "*An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings,*

thy sheep and thine oxen: in all places where I record my Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Ex. xx. 24.

Mysterious mound of earth! What was its secret that could draw the terrors from that flaming mountain? Let us see.

The promises which had now passed between the children of Israel and God were recorded in a book, and it was called "the book of the covenant." This covenant was to be solemnly confirmed before God. For this service Moses built "the altar" God had commanded. It was to be no pagan ceremony such as they had seen in Egypt; neither should this altar resemble those altars erected for the worship of the gods of the heathen. No tool even could be used about it: "An altar *of earth* shalt thou build." Around it were placed twelve pillars, a pillar for each tribe, and seventy elders were chosen from the different tribes that each might be represented there. And here they offered their burnt offerings and their peace offerings to the Lord. Ex. xxiv.

While the smoke from the sacrifices ascends to God, Moses reads to the people

their solemn vows, and with the blood he sprinkles both the altar and the book, and afterward the people; and he adds, "Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." And the people said, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." Thus the first covenant was sealed with blood. If they kept this covenant, all was well; but if they failed, all was over: they were without hope. "This do, and thou shalt live," was the condition. Could they keep it? God knew they could not; therefore upon this altar was shed that blood which was ever to stand as the type and promise of the second covenant—that better covenant in which God would be merciful, not to their righteousness, but to their unrighteousness, and would remember their sins and iniquities no more. (See Heb. viii. 10–13.)

This simple pile must have been a strange contrast to the terrible mountain as it flamed above them, yet it proclaimed the Christ—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"—and not even the law as

it came to them from the midst of the fire could condemn them there. For this was the promise made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before, and one which the law could not now make of no effect. (See Gal. iii. 17.)

Now nearer and nearer was the promised Messiah coming to the Hebrews; stronger and clearer was the light thrown upon the word which heralded his advent, and which the altar and its dread sacrifices uttered, anticipating the fullness of the "better covenant." The believing Israelite, as he looked through these services by faith to Him who was to come, was saved.

The service at the altar seems ended; each worshiper has been sprinkled with the blood which spoke the "better things." Yet the multitude do not scatter, for now together they ascend the mountain itself, towering above them with its awful crown of fire and smoke, "and they saw the God of Israel, and under his feet there was as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." We may not allow ourselves to imagine what was the scene

to which they passed within the clouds; it has been permitted us to know that "they saw God, and did eat and drink." Covered with those drops of blood, these poor despised Hebrew fugitives were admitted into the very presence of Jehovah. That blood was a sufficient passport. No terror now drove them away: the "God of Israel"—God in Christ, the promised Saviour—was before them in his glory.

LETTER XII.

THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD.

As the divine plan unfolded, the great end in view was still this—to reveal Christ. This was done especially in the altar-service around which the new life of the people was now to centre. God would not leave them to the uncertain and mistaken guidance of an earthly monarch: he himself became their King; and, as an earthly monarch lives among his people, so God said, “I will dwell among the children of Israel.” The heaven of heavens could not contain him, yet he said to Moses, “Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. There will I meet with them and will talk with them.” In this sanctuary he left nothing to human design or taste or skill: he himself was the architect, and the oft-repeated charge to Moses was, “See that thou make

all things after the pattern showed thee in the mount."

Everything connected with this wonderful building was a type of something greater. There was no "manner of similitude" of the great triune God, but each part had its deep meaning in heavenly truth: "Everything seemed to have a finger with which to point to the Messiah." It was built by inspiration of God, and God accepted it, as he did his own creation, as all "very good." Let us make it, then, for a little while our study. In it we see the boundless compassion and patience of God toward these poor Hebrews. Their minds had been kept in great ignorance, and their hearts were horribly corrupted by the abominations of the Egyptians. Wherever they had been in Egypt they came face to face with these abominations—within their temples, by the wayside, in their homes; they could see them, hear them, touch them. It would take a long time wholly to free their minds from these idolatries, but the lessons taught by the sanctuary would be a great help toward this end.

Everything about the building was as gorgeous and as rich as the most precious and costly materials could make it; all was the gift of the people and was prepared by their hands. Their former life in Egypt must have brought them into connection with the arts and manufactures which at that time were probably in their highest state of perfection among the Egyptians, yet it is expressly said that their skill and knowledge came from the Spirit of God. Ex. xxxv. 30-35; xxxvi. 1. The structure was in the form of an oblong tent or tabernacle, forty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide. Its coverings were curtains—the outer ones of skins, to protect from the weather; the inner ones of fine twined linen embroidered “with cherubim of cunning work” in blue and purple and scarlet and gold. The frame of the tent, its boards and pillars, were of shittim-wood and were overlaid with plates of pure gold, and all the furniture of the tent was of gold, either overlaid or pure beaten gold. Within, it was divided into two rooms of unequal size—one called the holy place, the other the most holy or the holy of holies.

Within the most holy place was a small chest about four feet long and over two feet wide and high. This was the "ark of the covenant." Upon it rested the "mercy-seat," overshadowed by cherubim with outstretched wings. Within the ark was the law on tables of stone, *hidden*, as it were, *by the mercy-seat* from the view of God himself; for above the mercy-seat was the place where the glory of God's presence appeared: here he would dwell among his people. Before the ark hung a veil of beautiful embroidery, separating the two rooms. Just outside the veil was a small "golden altar," a foot and a half square; upon this altar sweet incense was constantly burned. The "sweet savor" of Christ's intercession as he presents the prayers of his people is probably shown here, for he ever liveth to make intercession for us. It suggests, too, how precious to God is all true prayer.

On the north side of the tabernacle stood a small table with a "crown" of gold round about it; on it were kept twelve loaves of bread sprinkled over with pure frankincense. These were changed every Sabbath. This

was the “show-bread”—the bread of presence. Does it not again represent to us Christ, the “Bread that came down from heaven, the Bread of life”? The fine flour of which it was always to be made, even through the dreary, rocky wilderness, must have been as miraculously supplied as was the manna which was the people’s daily food.

On the opposite side of the tabernacle stood a candlestick of pure beaten gold about five feet in height, with seven lamps. This was the only source of light in the tent, for the light which shone around the mercy-seat was concealed from view by the veil. No light from the sun might enter through those closed curtains, but these lamps were kept burning continually, and every day they were filled with pure olive-oil. Oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, who was given to Christ without measure; we are again reminded of Him who is the Light of every man that cometh into the world—reminded, too, of the final glory of that city that has “no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God

doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But, as we have now described the tabernacle, if this were all it must have been unapproached and unapproachable by the waiting multitudes who stood around it. The Israelites could not enter these courts of spotless purity and holiness, nor come into the presence of Him who dwelt there. Of what use, then, could all this be to them? How could they draw nigh to God and not be consumed by his glory?

Outside the tent, before the entrance, was an altar, "hollow with boards and overlaid with brass," enclosing the "altar of earth." On this altar was to be a daily offering of two lambs—one in the morning, and one in the evening. This, then, was a place of death where life would be continually sacrificed, where daily blood would flow. Sad and cruel it may seem; what it foretold seems sadder and more cruel still; for outside the walls of Jerusalem the Son of God was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain. He was made a sacrifice for our sins. And this sacrifice was all-sufficient

even in those distant years of prophecy ; and this daily-flowing blood was then preaching mercy and pardon and a welcome back to the Father, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But *the altar stood before the tabernacle* ; only by it could there be entrance to the presence of God. The blood of the altar was the type of Christ's atoning blood, and with it the door of the sanctuary was opened.

Between the altar and the door of the tabernacle was the "laver." Here those who engaged in the sacred services must wash before entering the tabernacle. Did this not show that for those who would enter the presence of God, and who would see his face, there must be *purity* as well as *pardon* ? The very order is significant : first the altar, then the laver ; first forgiveness, then holiness ; or, as the theologians would say, first justification, then sanctification.

But it required more than the sacrifice itself to tell all the story of redeeming love ; one more figure was necessary. Something far better awaited the Israelite than to go for himself into the sanctuary to meet God. Christ

is our Intercessor as well as our Sacrifice. We are told many times in the word of God that Christ's place in heaven is at the right hand of his Father, and that there he ever lives to intercede for those he died to save, and that everything that interests them is dear to him. What a blessed assurance this is! To us weak and tempted ones on our way to heaven, the knowledge of what Christ is doing for us in heaven is dearer than life. Now, these poor Hebrews needed as much as we to know something of these great truths, for I have no doubt our dear Saviour began this blessed work for men as soon as they needed a Saviour. But how were *they* to learn this?

God chose out of the tribes of Israel one tribe—the tribe of Levi—to aid Moses in the great work of the religious services. Out of this tribe he chose the family of Aaron, Moses' brother, to serve at the altar and within the tabernacle. The sons were to be priests, while Aaron was to be the high priest. The tribe of Levi had perhaps been more steadfast to the religion of their fathers' God than any of the other tribes, and

it may be that for this reason they had this honor given to them. Or it may be we can only say of this choice, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The special office of the priest was to offer the sacrifices at the altar of burnt offering and incense at the golden altar within the tabernacle. To the high priest pertained those peculiar duties that made him the great type of Christ, and therefore made him the one to whom turned the eye and the heart of all true Israelites. He alone—once every year—could go into the very presence of God within the veil, but he could go only as he carried blood from the altar of burnt offering. With that blood he sprinkled the mercy-seat, and by the merit of that blood he made intercession for the sins of the people.

The very dress of the high priest, in every part, taught something about Christ; it was all designed by God, even as the building had been. There were the ephod and the breastplate, the robe, the girdle and the mitre. All were of exquisite workmanship, and, whether the meaning of all could be

understood or not, there was one part which even the humblest Israelite could understand: it was the breastplate. This was worn over all the garments. Upon it were twelve precious stones in settings of gold, and on these were engraved the names of the twelve tribes, one on each stone. These were "memorial stones." And as Aaron went in and out before the Lord in the service of the tabernacle this breastplate was always worn; these names were on his heart continually. This was God's way of helping the children of Israel to understand how dear each one of his people was to him. The lesson is for us too, for our great High Priest carries on his heart the names of all who love him and trust him. As we are taught to sing,

"The names of all his saints he wears
Deep graven on his heart,
Nor shall the meanest Christian say
That he has lost his part.

"Those characters shall fair abide—
Our everlasting trust—
When gems and monuments and crowns
Are mouldered down to dust."

Do we wonder that when Moses returned to the people, after he had been so long en-

circled by the splendor of Jehovah's glory within the cloud, his face reflected the dazzling brightness of that heavenly glory, and that the people drew back from him in fear until he put a veil upon his face? It may surprise us that he had not before caught the same glory whenever he had been with the Lord; but our wonder is gone, I think, since we have learned of what God talked with him at this time—that it was of the story of infinite love. And the glory which shone from the face of Moses seemed a reflection of the glory of that plan which could save a world of sinners. *Before*, he had received the law: "This do and thou shall live," but "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now it was the gospel—the good tidings of great joy to sinners who could not keep that law. And this tabernacle and all these strange services were designed to help the Hebrews to grasp these mysterious thoughts, to understand and to believe them; for still it all meant Christ.

"So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the taber-

nacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

"Within the tabernacle door,
My soul, what dost thou see?
'Tis 'Jesus, Jesus,' everywhere,
That shows himself to me.

"'The holy place' is full of light—
A light that goes out never:
'Tis Jesus who has changed my night
To day that lasts for ever.

"The holy place has holy food
Each Sabbath newly spread:
'Tis Jesus that I here behold,
The true and living Bread.

"And now I press beyond the veil,
And venture still more near:
Within the 'holiest of all'
What glories now appear!

"Upon the ark a mercy-seat
(A perfect law within):
'Tis Jesus, 'full of grace and truth,'
Atoning for my sin.

"The given law was broken once,
But now in Christ is whole,
And mercy reigns once more supreme
O'er my enraptured soul.

“O Jesus, thou art all in all!
I care for none like thee;
All else be hidden from my sight,
But show thyself to me.”

LETTER XIII.

THE BURNT OFFERING.

A YEAR has now passed since the children of Israel left Egypt; we should hardly recognize in them the people who so short a time before fled in such haste from the land of their bondage and idolatry. They are again the people of God; once more they worship him at "the altar" as their fathers did. The tabernacle is finished, and is before them in its beauty and glory, the earthly dwelling-place of Him who inhabiteth eternity. No doubt they are anxious to be again on the march with their faces toward the Promised Land, yet they remain at the foot of Sinai four weeks longer.

By the appointment of Aaron and his sons as priests Moses is relieved in a measure from care, and spends those weeks under the immediate instruction of God; but it is at the mercy-seat that God now talks with him,

and not from amid the terrors of Sinai. The instructions concern the services of the tabernacle and the new religious life of the people. The book of Leviticus is the record of these instructions. Even to the most minute directions all is dignified by being uttered by the voice of God, and we find at the close that here, in wonderful type, is our own gospel of "glad tidings" where each great truth of the gospel "stands out as an object of sight."

The first instructions were in reference to the burnt offering; as it was first used in the service of God, so it continued to be the principal one. We have in the Bible, I think, no positive record of any other offering for between two thousand and three thousand years of the early history; or if there were others, they seemed to be blended in this. In it was the great underlying truth of all the sacrifices: "Ye are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ;" and the greatness and completeness of the Saviour's sufferings were fitly expressed by the "whole burnt offering." For it was not of the *death* of Christ alone that the burnt

offering was a prophecy: it showed him surrendering himself wholly, in every event and in every hour of his life, to his Father's will. His whole life was a sacrifice. "Being in the form of God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The burnt offering was the morning and evening sacrifice, the perpetual sacrifice throughout the year; and day by day, year after year, it was offered, interrupted only by the judgments that fell upon the people for their sins, until the great Offerer appeared to put away sin for ever by the sacrifice of himself.

The altar at the door of the tabernacle was of the finest brass, as was the laver, which stood between it and the door for the frequent washings which were necessary during these ceremonies. The entire building was made in such a way that it could easily be moved from place to place; so the altar was made as light as possible—"hollow with boards" and overlaid with brass, and with

staves and rings by which to carry it. The fire once kindled on this altar was never to go out, but as the camp moved was carried from place to place in the fire-pans provided for this purpose. The wood for the fire must be the choicest; nothing could be used that was gnarled, unsightly or imperfect.

The animals for the sacrifices were to be without blemish, from the herd and from the flock, a bullock, a sheep or a goat, besides the turtle-dove and the young pigeon—gentle, harmless, fit types of that which was to be represented. A “seal,” or mark, was placed on each when set apart for the altar-service. It is very striking that this same expression is used of Christ: “Him hath God the Father sealed.” For, “lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Lamb of God was sealed by the Spirit of God for his service and his suffering. By this selection of animals none were shut out from the service. There would be many who could

not afford the large expensive bullock, yet who could bring a sheep or a goat, and many too who could not bring even a lamb, and for these there was the turtle-dove or young pigeon. But usually it was the offering that lay midway between the means of the rich and the poor—the lamb. This was the offering for the morning and evening service. A “voluntary offering” might be either of the animals mentioned.

The offerer brought his victim to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle. There stood the altar, and there, on the north side of the altar, the animal was killed. But first the offerer laid his hands upon the head of the animal, confessing his sins and putting them on the head of the victim. This was the tie that bound them together, the guilty sinner transferring his sins to the innocent substitute that he might bear the suffering they deserved. This was what it meant. When the offering was for the whole congregation, the priest took the place of the offerer. The meaning was still the same: the sins of the people were laid on the victim who died for them.

In this service everything is done with deliberation and care; there is no passion in the hand that slays. He who is appointed kills the animal, and then, taking the body, lays the parts, the head and the fat, in order on the wood that is burning upon the altar. Here the whole is consumed to ashes. The skin only is reserved, and given to the priest who performs the service.

How sadly, and yet how clearly, is here shown to the believing sinner what his sin deserves and from what he is saved! Here, too, how visibly we see the type of Him who put his own life in our lives' place! Even to the worthless ashes and the last drop of the wasting blood, all is of priceless value. The blood is caught by the priest in the brazen bowls, and with it he sprinkles the altar and pours it "round about and upon the altar on every side." Even so the Son of God "*poured out*" his soul unto death.

The ashes from the altar were taken far away outside the camp where the refuse was thrown; yet must the priest himself, having changed his linen clothes, stained with the blood-marks from the sacrifice, and put on

fresh garments, bear them away, finding for them "a clean place." The types are carried out to the very end. So long before, it seems to me, was Joseph's "new tomb" foreseen, and the resting-place for those precious "ashes" of our Saviour provided for; for "in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus." Little thought Joseph of Arimathea, when he chose in the rocks of Golgotha a place of burial for himself, for what purpose that choice was made; and when he and Nicodemus took down the torn and mangled body of the Lord from the cross, and, tenderly wrapping it in linen, laid it in the tomb, how little either thought he was fulfilling the strange type of carrying the ashes to "a clean place," or that here too, where criminals were put to death and buried, Isaiah's prophecy was to be fulfilled: "He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death."

This was the service of the burnt offering—an offering made by fire, of "*a sweet savor unto the Lord.*" We may not fathom the

depth of this strange expression as God uses it, not here alone and once, but again and again ; it is enough that they are God's own words. The substituted offering is acceptable to him ; the guilty go free by the suffering of the innocent. We know what it means : " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And now

" 'Tis not for me to touch
That finished work of his, or seek
To add a sigh or tear or groan
Of mine to what he bore, or speak
Of aught in me but sin. Alone,
O Christ, thou hadst to bear my doom—
To take my deep dark curse on thee,
And bear it all ; and now there's room
For grace to pardon even me.

" Now I dare to look above
And call thee Father, though my heart's
Defiled, my lips unclean. Thy love
Has conquered fear ; though Satan's darts
Fall thick around me and within
I dare not look—'tis like a sea
That cannot rest, and full of sin—
I now can look away to thee,
And find in thee my peace, nor fear
To rest my trembling, sin-stained soul
Upon thy word, and so draw near."

LETTER XIV.

THE MEAT OFFERING AND THE DRINK OFFERING.

IN these short studies of the sacrifices I cannot, of course, attempt a full explanation of each, but I hope you may be led to make a careful study of them all for yourself, that you may understand at least their general meaning, and thus be able to appreciate many allusions with which the Scriptures abound, and which are meaningless without such knowledge.

In the very structure of the tabernacle we find that access to God can be only by the altar of sacrifice—by atoning blood; in the burnt offering we find the atoning sacrifice—the offering that takes away our sin and brings us into the presence of God in peace. But shall not he who is thus pardoned and accepted of God show his gratitude and his consecration? Shall he not

bring to God an offering and enter his gates with joy? This result is represented by the meat offering, which consisted of the choice products of the earth, flour and oil. These were typical of all that was most valuable, and the sacrifice was a grateful acknowledgment that all the blessings of this life, as well as our redemption from eternal death, come to us through the Saviour, and that all belong to him: "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Read 1 Chron. xxix. 10-14.

The meat offering does not mean here literally an offering of *flesh*, as we use the word, for it was a bloodless offering; perhaps the word "food" would better express its meaning. Yet generally the offering was of the flour of wheat or barley, and it has been called by some a meal offering.

With the flour—which must be the finest—were mixed oil and salt; frankincense also was a part of the offering. The ordinary sacrifice required about two quarts and a half of flour and about one quart of oil; these were brought to the priest, and he took from them a handful of the oil and flour and all the

frankincense as a “memorial” for the altar. These were then laid upon the burnt offering, and the smoke from both ascended together to heaven; and again it was declared by God to be “a sweet-smelling savor.”

Oil was an emblem of consecration, of being set apart by the Holy Spirit for God’s service; something like this was probably its meaning when used with this sacrifice. Oil was mixed with the flour to consecrate it to God’s use, and was a type, therefore, of setting apart one’s self to the service of God. Aaron and his sons were anointed with the holy oil when they were set apart and consecrated as priests to the Lord; so all prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil when they received their office. You remember that Jacob anointed with oil the stone which he had used for his pillow the night he passed at Bethel, when he set it up for God’s house.

In like manner, salt was always a part of every sacrifice. The special property of salt is to preserve, to prevent corruption and decay; so when the salt was mixed with the flour it perhaps denoted that when the offerer gave himself to God it was an agreement

which was to last for ever. There was a deep meaning, therefore, in the injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thy offerings thou shalt offer salt."

The use of the frankincense was a most merciful provision; for when burnt, it sent forth a very agreeable odor and prevented the atmosphere of the court of the tabernacle from becoming unpleasant from the continual burning of flesh. But, more than all, the sweet odor of the frankincense may be considered as a symbol of what Christ does for each one of us in heaven by his loving intercession for us before his Father's throne. When Christ takes us as we give ourselves and all we have to him—takes our poor prayers and praises and offers them himself to his Father—with such an Advocate we cease to wonder that they are "a sweet odor unto the Lord." But more strange than all it seems that we ourselves appear to him no longer criminals, but even as his own children, and thus heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

After the "memorial" had been taken away from the meat offering, what remained was for Aaron and his sons: it was God's appointment that the table of the priests should be supplied from the gifts brought to the altar. The priests were types of Christ; their office was a holy one; therefore God gave to them those gifts of the altar which had been dedicated to himself. They alone were permitted to eat of them, and they must do so in the holy place, in the court of the tabernacle. Now, the oil and the salt, while they were sacred parts of the offering, yet also supplied the necessary ingredients for making the flour into the unleavened bread for the use of the priests. Thus the bread became a thing "most holy;" it had been given to the Lord, and whatever is given to the Lord becomes in this sense holy; it is a divine change, surely, which makes sinners such as we are faultless before him.

But you will notice there are various forms in which the meat offerings may be brought to the altar. Just as for the burnt offerings a lamb or a dove was as acceptable to God from the poor as were the more costly sacrifices of the

rich, so here we find the same gracious rule. "If he is rich, let him bring his fine flour from the finest of the wheat. If he is not able to do this, let him bring 'a meat offering baken in the oven.' If he cannot afford this, having no oven, then let him bring somewhat 'baken in the fire-plate,' or pan. If even this is not in his power, he will at least possess a frying-pan, and let him bring what it prepares."* However, in one thing they must be alike: each must have the oil as a portion of the gift; even to the poor man who has only a frying-pan the oblation must be of fine flour with oil. Without the oil of consecration it could not be pleasant unto the Lord; with it, however humble it might be, "a memorial" was taken from it exactly as from the most costly, and it was "a sweet savor unto the Lord."

All this comes too near the daily Christian life of each one of us now not to arrest our attention. If this life is ours, do we at our daily hours of sacrifice bring to our Redeemer ourselves and all we possess, even

* Bonar.

“the finest of our wheat,” mingled with oil? Can we indeed say?—

“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.

“Take my moments and my days:
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

“Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.

“Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and ‘beautiful’ for thee.

“Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.

“Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.

“Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.

“Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

“Take my will, and make it thine:
It shall be no longer mine.

“Take my heart; it is thine own:
It shall be thy royal throne.

“Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store.

“Take myself, and I will be
Ever *only*, ALL, for thee.”

Then, to show the heartiness with which these sacrifices were brought to God, the joy it gave to believe in a coming Saviour, wine was poured over the ashes of the sacrifices. This was the drink offering. Wine was an emblem of joy. The drink offering was not in itself a sacrifice, but was used only in connection with other sacrifices. Neither was it enjoined upon the people while on their journey—not until they should come to their own land, the “land of oil and wine,” where their own vines would pour out to them this “joy of the Lord.” Num. xv. 2–5.

This service is beautifully illustrated in the story of Hannah and Elkanah. As they went up from their home in Ramah to Shiloh, where the tabernacle then was, to offer their yearly sacrifice within its courts, they took with them their little son Samuel. Years before, the vow had been made that he should be the Lord’s, and it had never been forgotten; and, now that his parents came to fulfill it, it was not done grudgingly: “As long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord.” And the sacrifice they

brought with them was the best and an over-abundant supply: a bullock for each as a burnt offering, an ephah of the finest flour as a meat offering—more than enough for the three—and a bottle or kid-skin full of wine. And they slew the bullock and brought the child to Eli;

“For the boy was vowed
Unto the temple-service. By the hand
She led him, and her silent soul the while,
Oft as the dewy laughter of his eye
Met her sweet serious glance, rejoiced to think
That aught so pure, so beautiful, was hers
To bring before her God.”

LETTER XV.

THE PEACE OFFERING.

ALTHOUGH each sacrifice had its distinct part in the service of the tabernacle and something peculiar to itself, yet it is not easy to give each, as it differs from others, its exact shade of meaning. For all the sacrifices have much in common, and in each there were truths which lay at the foundation of all the religious worship of the people. Each refers to Christ in such a way as to find its chief expression in showing his death as the great salvation; each owns his entire right to every soul and to the best it has to give.

We have seen that through the burnt offering the Israelites were taught that He who was to come—their promised Deliverer, the Messiah—was to suffer and die, to die in their stead,

"In a mortal, suffering frame,
Temple of the Deity."

We have also seen that the meat and drink offering, spoke of the full consecration of the forgiven soul. Now, how would such a soul express its gratitude for its rescue but in an outpouring of praise and thanksgiving? Most naturally, then, the service next in order is the peace offering—or, as it is often called, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving," "the sacrifice of praise" and "the freewill offering." It might well have found expression in such words as these :

"Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul;
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.

"Not what I feel or do
Can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears
Can bear my awful load.

"Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within."

For a peace offering the Israelite went to the "herd" or to the "flock," and chose from

it a perfect animal, either male or female. He brought it to the door of the tabernacle, as all the victims for the altar were brought. Here he laid his hands upon its head, confessing his sins, as he did with the burnt offering; there were also the same taking of life, the same dividing of the victim in parts and the same gathering of the blood and the sprinkling and pouring of it round about and upon the altar. But when the victim was brought to the altar, it was laid upon the sacrifice of the burnt offering; for this was always there, slowly burning and its smoke ever ascending to heaven.

Unlike the burnt offering, however, only a part of the peace offering was laid upon the altar, but it was the richest part of the animal—that which lay deepest within, nearest the heart. This was God's portion. The breast and the right shoulder were given to the priest, and the remainder was given back to the person who had brought the sacrifice, as food for his own table. The altar is sometimes called the "table of the Lord," and the sacrifice "the food" and "the bread of God." Lev. iii. 11; xxi. 22;

Mal. i. 7. For the peace offering denoted not only reconciliation and peace with God, but the most endearing friendship. And, as these pieces were taken to the different homes, it was to be their Father's feast with them—the symbol of affection. God in his great compassion seems to have used every form of illustration with which his erring people were familiar to show their welcome back to him.

When those portions of the offering which were for God and the priest were brought to the altar, the priest placed them in the hands of the offerer, who then raised them toward heaven as an offering for its King. To the breast he gave a waving motion; to the shoulder, a heaving or upward motion. This act seemed to give to the worshiper a part in the service which none of the other sacrifices had done, and by it he could testify to all who witnessed the act the goodness of the Lord to him.

When a lamb was taken as this offering, you will notice that particular mention is made of the tail; this is because in the Syrian sheep the tail is extremely large and

fat, sometimes, it is said, weighing many pounds. To protect it from injury and to relieve the animal in carrying it, it is often supported by a small barrow fastened underneath and with wheels attached. This tail is peculiarly rich—more like marrow than ordinary fat—and the flavor is very fine. It is considered a great delicacy, and is very valuable. The whole of this was for the Lord.

You see the truth: He who gave the Best of heaven for the “peace” of his people claims the best their hearts can give—their deepest, purest thoughts and feelings.

To this offering was added unleavened bread-cakes with oil. This, you will remember, was a part of the meat offering, and you see the peculiar fitness of this; it was as if to unite a fresh consecration of one’s self with these expressions of gratitude. But, what was unusual in offerings to the Lord, the offerer also brought cakes of leavened bread—that is, bread made with yeast. Undoubtedly this was an act of humiliation, of confession, for leaven was a type of sin and of corruption, and was

never allowed when the sacrifice represented Christ alone. But this sacrifice did not so much represent Christ as it represented the grateful love of his penitent children, and no act could better show their contrition than coming into the presence of God with leavened bread. The priest himself lifted up one of these cakes toward heaven as a heave offering unto God.

In the peace offering, as in the others, the lamb and the goat could be substituted for the more expensive bullock if necessary—either was acceptable—only it must be without blemish: the sinless purity of the Son of God, their great Sacrifice, must never be overlooked. Then, too, the animal might be a female; in the burnt offering it must be a male, for only Christ is referred to there. But, as the peace offering represented all the children of God, it might be either male or female.

With such a value put upon the fat and the blood, we can understand why God says, “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations, throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.”

It did not mean alone the fat and the blood of animals offered in sacrifice, but all that should be used "throughout their dwellings." Imagine what such directions would be to us—the claim of the death of our dear Saviour meeting us constantly in the midst of our busy, and often thoughtless, lives, so that in our hourly occupations, and in our daily meals as well, there should always be something to remind us of Christ.

The fatness of the offering, we have learned, was the Lord's portion; yet we find God saying, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. lv. 2. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." Ps. xxxvi. 8. How comes it that the Lord's portion is given to us sinners? Here again the New Testament unlocks the treasures of the Old. In Christ we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Lord's portion is the portion of his people. All things are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

“The love of heaven has come to earth—
The love of God to sinful men,
The love that giveth life and light—
Through Him who died and rose again.
This word of love to man he speaks;
Who shall that word of love unsay?
‘As far as east is from the west,
So far I bear your sins away.’

“The peace of heaven has come to earth—
The peace of God to sinners here;
It shineth sweetly from the cross,
It takes from us each guilty fear.
This word of peace to man he speaks;
Who shall that word of peace unsay?
‘As far as east is from the west,
So far I bear your sins away.’”

LETTER XVI.

THE SIN OFFERING AND THE TRESPASS OFFERING.

THE only forms of offering which remain for us to study are the sin and trespass offerings. Perhaps the sin offering more than any other gave help and comfort to the worshiper; it was for the offerer's own personal sins, and could be made a *private* service. This must at times have been a great privilege. It was for the priests and rulers as well as for the people; it was for all just as it was needed. The great thought was the same for all.

The Voice from between the cherubim above the mercy-seat calls again to Moses: "If a soul sin through *ignorance* against any of the commands of the Lord, . . . if a soul touch any unclean thing, . . . and it be hidden from him; he also shall be guilty." Can it be that "secret sins"—errors hidden

even from ourselves, sins committed when at the time they were not known to be sinful,—are these such as must be atoned for by the actual giving up of life? Are we accountable for that we have not known to be sinful? Our only answer must be, “Yes, if it *is* sinful.” Paul considered himself “the chief of sinners” because he had persecuted the Church, although at the time he says he verily thought he was doing God service. And you remember it is said of those who crucified our Lord, “Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Were *they* not guilty? “I knew it not” will be no excuse for any sin. “If a soul sin though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.” It makes him a sinner, and he needs a Saviour.

Now, a precious truth it is that we have a Saviour who is fitted for just these circumstances in our lives; he is one who “has compassion on the ignorant.” The sin offering was instituted for just these. There is a way in which these sins—these daily, hourly thoughtless sins—can be forgiven. But for even this Christ must die.

Now, as we are taught to go with each sin just as we are, at once to Christ—unseen, but ever near—so the sinning Hebrew was directed to hasten at once to the high priest, to him who represented Christ to his faith. But the high priest was a sinner like himself; and if a common Israelite was verily guilty in all these things, much more must he be who lived in the constant presence and companionship of God. Before, therefore, he can represent Him who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and before he can help others, he must get rid of his own sin. Therefore the high priest offers a sacrifice first for himself. He chooses an ox, and does with it as he did with the burnt offering : he confesses over it his own sins, and then, leading it to the accustomed place, on the north side of the altar, the knife sets free the life-blood which typified that other blood which was to flow from nobler veins. This blood he gathers in basins and goes with it into the tabernacle, and there, prostrate before the veil which hides from him the glorious presence of God, he presents the blood and sprinkles it seven times before the veil. In this he shows his

entire dependence on *the blood*. He then puts this same precious blood on the four horns of the golden altar—the place whence the symbol of prayer ascends to the Father—as if to put God in remembrance by the sight of that blood. The remainder is poured out at the foot of the brazen altar, outside the tabernacle. Afterward he separates those parts of the animal which are for the Lord, and they are laid on the burning remains of the burnt offering. But the remainder, “even the whole bullock,” is gathered together and carried forth, far away out of the camp where the refuse is taken—a distance, it is said, of four miles—and there, on the ground, with no altar, it is left to burn alone as an abhorred thing, a worthless mass. Surely this was a type of hell itself. All was consumed; not even was the skin reserved for the priest, as in the burnt offering. So completely had his sin been conveyed to the poor animal as to make it, *as sin* itself, fit only for destruction.

Here was the disgrace of Calvary typified. Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us. Every mark of shame and suffering was

heaped upon him as he came to the cross at Golgotha, where he took our sins upon himself and gave up his life for us. From that sight of sin even the Father hid his face.

The victim of the high priest's offering was subjected, as far as possible, to all that would portray the sufferings of Christ. But you will notice a great difference when he offers for the people. For them he takes a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, and the directions are, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and shall slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering. And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar. And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savor unto the Lord; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." You see how different this is from the offering for the high priest himself. The killing of the an-

imal was, of course, common to both, but the contempt and disgrace which were cast upon the victim's body in one case are quite absent from the other. And in the offering for the people all that remained from the Lord's portion was given to the priests, to be eaten by them as a thing "most holy."

How wonderfully this taught, by the language of sacrifice, what we have learned by the language of the New Testament! "For he hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

So holy were these elements considered that whatever should touch them must be holy. Most careful directions were given in reference to them. If any of the blood should drop upon any garment, the command was, "Thou shalt wash that whereon it was sprinkled in the holy place. But the earthen vessel wherein it is sodden shall be broken; and if it be sodden in a brazen pot, it shall be both scoured and rinsed in water." And you notice that this sin offering for the people really becomes a peace offering, and unto God is even "a sweet-smelling savor."

Through it the Lord teaches his people that he has taken their sins upon himself and has borne them for them. Why, therefore, should they also bear them? "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

Through such ceremonies as these God taught the Hebrews something of the mysterious and fearful sacredness of "atoning blood." It was the central thought of the sacrifice, leading their faith forward to the infinitely precious blood which was to be shed for them, and which alone could atone for their sins. Yet this blood would be sufficient, and more than sufficient, to cover all their guilt, to blot out all their sin. It is this which makes the joy of the saints at his right hand as they sing the song which will be ever "new:" "Thou art worthy, . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

THE TRESPASS OFFERING.

Though the sin offering and the trespass offering were considered two distinct offerings, yet there are so many things in which

they are alike, and so few in which they differ, and even these so doubtful, that we will not attempt to separate them. The general meaning is the same, although it is thought by some that the trespass offering was intended for more secret sins or for those which needed reparation or recompense to the offended person. When this was so, a fifth part of the value of the loss was added to it as it was returned or made good to the owner. It was the spirit of this sacrifice which prompted Zaccheus, when he came to Jesus, to say, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

The trespass offering was always a ram, and the blood was sprinkled "on the sides" of the altar, and not put upon the horns, as in the sin offering. But here, as in the sin offering, it was *the blood* of the sacrifice which was the central thought; and so all along from the first to this final offering, you see it has been the blood that has been the heart of all these services. Without it they have no meaning.

LETTER XVII.

THE SACRIFICE AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.

ALL is now completed. The tabernacle and its holy emblems are within, the laver and the altar without; the different sacrifices for the altar have been appointed, and for these mysterious services Aaron and his sons have been chosen priests. All that now remains to be done is to consecrate these earthly types to Him by whom they were appointed and for whom they stood.

Moses calls the congregation together to the new house of their God to witness the scene which was to be of such interest to each one of them. Aaron and his sons take their place at the altar at the door of the tabernacle, and by their side are the victims for the service. Moses, still wearing the veil, stands with them to clothe them with the priestly robes and consecrate them to their

new office, and then himself to step aside and give place to his brother. Up to this time Moses had probably ministered at the altar, and had stood between the Almighty and the people; now this high honor is to pass from him. He accepts the change, yet it could hardly be made without sore trial to him. Now chief among the group is Aaron. And well may he be the one on whom all eyes are fixed. He has been chosen of God to be the high priest, the type of Christ as nothing else could represent him to be—a living, loving, interceding Priest and Mediator between God and man.

Moses first washes Aaron with water from the laver, and then puts upon him the “glorious and beautiful” garments of his new office. How eagerly must all of that innumerable company have watched as every separate garment was put upon him, each made by the priest’s own hands with Heaven-taught skill, and each teaching some great truth of the true High Priest to come! Still more absorbing must have been their interest when the breastplate was set with its twelve precious stones engraved with the

names of all the tribes. Each man knew his own tribe's name was then bound upon the high priest's heart, to go with him into the very presence of God. When the priestly robes had been put upon Aaron, Moses took the holy oil and poured it upon his head; this was the act of consecration. Oil, as I have said, was a type of the Holy Spirit, and this was to show that Aaron was set apart by the Spirit to his high office.

But what did the consecration of Aaron mean? Was it simply to give to the nation a leader in their religious services—some one who would attend at the altar and its sacrifices? It was far more than this: it was providing the Hebrew nation with a way of coming to God such as no other nation ever had. It was to teach them as vividly as it was possible then to teach such a truth, that a greater High Priest was to be given and consecrated to draw near to God for sinners, and to open the way for the approach of sinners themselves to God. In Aaron they saw the type of "the Friend of sinners," their Intercessor—of Him who was, as has been said, "set apart for the use of sinners."

As Moses did for Aaron, so he did for Aaron's sons: he clothed them in their priestly garments and consecrated them with the holy oil. He anointed the tabernacle also, and all its furniture, and every vessel and article used in the service, consecrating each to Jehovah. But the altar at the door of the tabernacle, laden with its weight of dying love, was sprinkled seven times with the holy oil. Then were the innocent victims brought to the altar and slain there as burnt offerings, and upon their heads Aaron and his sons laid their hands and confessed their sins. Then Moses took the warm, fresh blood from the altar, and, mingling it with the sacred oil, with his finger dipped in the blood and oil he touches the tips of their right ears and the thumbs of their right hands and the great toes of their right feet. Every power and faculty was consecrated: they were to hear and to work and to move for God.

Now all is done, and the company of priests turn aside from the altar to "the door of the tabernacle," where they were to remain seven days. Here they were to

spend their time in special services of praise and prayer; from the midst of this little group must have been heard the voice of singing while the smoke from the sacrifice was seen ascending from among them. They were not to go out of the door of the tabernacle until these days of consecration were accomplished; the time had not come for them to go within the house of God, only within its courts. When the eighth day comes, they appear again before the people. Aaron takes his stand at the altar now as their high priest; the great congregation gather once more to meet him. His first act is to offer up sin offerings and burnt offerings for himself and his sons, as if he would say, "I am not the Christ. There cometh One after me, mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

But there are other victims for the altar than those of Aaron and his sons: the people have brought theirs also. They probably know that there is to be some unusual manifestation. What will it be? Will they dare to draw near? Will the terrors of Sinai be repeated? If so, they will come

with the blood of the altar in their hands. Having offered for himself, Aaron is now prepared to bring this offering of the people—the bullock and the lambs—and, gathering the life-blood in basins, he lays the victims in order upon the altar, but adds no fire to the sacrifice. He leaves it there while, with Moses leading the way, he withdraws from sight within the tabernacle. We can almost see Aaron turn to the people and point to the breastplate as he disappears within the curtained sanctuary; for his errand is to the golden altar to mingle his prayers with the ascending smoke of the sweet incense, as well as to be instructed by Moses as to his new duties there.

Precious knowledge for each burdened heart—"for me, for me he pleadeth"! Yet not more surely was each name recorded on the breastplate of the high priest than are the names of his people on the heart of Him to whom the high priest went, and who was listening to that voice as it ascended for the first time with the incense from the golden altar.

How long Moses and Aaron remain within

the sanctuary we do not know—probably until the time of the evening sacrifice; but when they return, those millions of expectant worshipers are there to meet them. But not now with blood does the high priest come to them, but with the words of precious benediction: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Then, lo! the glory of the Lord appears before them. As a cloud it covers the tent of the congregation and fills the tabernacle. God is still the same he has ever been to them—“a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.” While they stand thus absorbed by the sight fire darts from the midst, and, rushing by the people, falls on the sacrifice upon the altar and consumes it. It touches not one of that mighty throng, but its fury seizes the innocent victims which have been laid thereon. When the people see this, they shout and fall on their faces. God has accepted the substitute, and they are safe.

This sacred fire once kindled from heaven

was preserved with the utmost care; it was never to go out. As the camp moved from place to place it was carried in the fire-pans designed for this purpose. From this fire coals were taken into the tabernacle for the golden altar and for the censer when incense was burned before the Lord, and it was death for any priest to transgress by offering other fire. Two of the priests, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, did attempt to set at naught this solemn command, and used strange fire in their censers. Fire from heaven slew them, and their dead bodies were carried out and buried without the camp, and the broken-hearted father "held his peace."

"Ah! thy Spirit shows me,
Christ, my Priest and King,
Sinless, stainless, perfect,
Is my offering.

"Look on thine Anointed;
Let my tongue be mute,
While we gaze together
On my Substitute.

"Thou art full well pleasèd
With thy spotless Lamb,
And thy Spirit tells me
What, O God, I am :

“Lost, abhorred and loathsome,
Leprous and unclean;
Yet enrobed in Jesus
I am spotless seen.

“Oh the weight of glory
It is *mine* to share!
Even now he calls *me*
‘Altogether fair.’”

LETTER XVIII.

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT.

THE various forms of sacrifice thus far described did not cover all the needs of the people. They met special cases, but sin was a continual indwelling power. For the mass of guilt unrecognized and unprovided for something more was needed; therefore God appointed a special day in each year wherein to make atonement *for all their sins*, even all the sinfulness of their hearts and all the sins, known and unknown, of their lives. This was the great day of atonement. It was appointed for the seventh month of the year, the tenth day, corresponding nearly to a day in our month of October.

Nothing else in all the services and ceremonies of the Jewish religion so wonderfully taught and illustrated the one truth which was ever above all the others, that “the

blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" and when we remember what this atonement meant to the faith that received it—a covering up, a washing away, of every sin of this great host of sinning Israelites—we cannot wonder that it was looked forward to as the great day of the whole year. It was the fast-day of the year, when they were to afflict their souls in penitence and humiliation before God, in which nothing must come between him and themselves. No manner of work was to be done on this day, and it is probable the previous week was spent in preparation for it. The sacrifices of the day represented the suffering Jesus, and the sinning Israelite must bow his soul to receive the blessing of the service.

Especially was this true for the high priest who in the awfully solemn duties of this day more fully than at any other time represented Christ to the people, for on this day "he appeared in the presence of God" for them. On this day he went within the veil, to the mercy-seat, to the very face of God, carrying in his hands that blood from the altar in which lay all their hope. How apt would he

be to be lifted up with the thought that he, of all the millions of Israel, was chosen of God to come into his presence! It was most needful that he should be truly and deeply penitent as he prepared for and engaged in the sacred duties of the day. Then, too, he must be so thoroughly acquainted with the special services of the day that there should be no possibility of omission or mistake. Each act and event during its hours was designed to teach the people momentous truths, and no one among that vast host could afford to lose the blessing which came with the solemn exercises. It is said that through the previous week the high priest was separated even from his family, and that the rites of the service were read to him daily by one of the elders. However this may be, he must be prepared for the service and must be worthy to be trusted, for on this day he went alone into the tabernacle; none of the priests aided him, as they did in the usual daily offerings. The people must be able to trust him *when they could not see him*.

You see the lesson: there is but one Mediator, one Saviour "able to save to the utter-

most, whom having not seen we love, in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

What a hush of hope and expectation must have prevailed over the multitude as they waited the dawn of this Day of days! Let us remember the immense numbers which were included in "the children of Israel"—probably, with all joined to them, at least three millions. Think how many homes were there, how many separate hearts were waiting to bring each its burden of sin to the great sacrifice.

To the usual burnt offerings of the day were added seven lambs each for the morning and the evening worship. It was fitting that a more complete service of consecration should mark the opening exercises of the day, yet these were burnt offerings, and were not intended to express so fully the great thought of the hour as the sin offering.

The day has now come; the usual morning services are over. Now the high priest lays aside his gorgeous priestly garments, and after bathing, as he did many times

during the day, he clothes himself throughout in pure white linen, with a linen mitre and girdle. These garments in their purity were types of the spotless Lamb of God; they were worn only for this one day. According to Jewish writers, they were newly provided each year.

The first duties of the high priest are for himself and his household. He leads to the altar a bullock as a sin offering, and with his hands upon its head confesses their sins and slays the victim, which gives up its life for them. Gathering the blood in a basin, with the sweet incense and the golden censer filled with burning coals from the altar, he goes into the tabernacle. He approaches the holy of holies and draws aside the curtain which conceals the mercy-seat. Immediately he casts upon the fire the incense, which rises in a cloud, concealing the brightness of the ineffable glory of the God whom he had come to meet. Then with his finger he sprinkles the blood once upon the mercy-seat and seven times around it. This blood is his only plea; with it he ventures into the presence of God. It is the symbol of his

own sentence of death and of his own escape. It is *atoning* blood. With strong crying and tears he claims the promise of that blood until he can look up into the face of a pardoning God and be at peace. Now he returns that he may secure the same mercy for the people. For them he takes a goat as their sin offering, and confesses over it their sin, and lays it in order on the altar. He gathers the blood in the basin and carries it into the tabernacle. With this blood he goes again into the presence of God, within the veil, and as he did for himself so he does for the people: he sprinkles the blood upon and around the mercy-seat, that they too by faith may hear the words of comfort: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

How eagerly must the expectant host have waited the coming back to them of their high priest from within the veil to receive his benediction, and to go down to their homes in the assurance of acceptance with God! "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

One would think that the lonely fire always burning for the victim of the sin offering

far away at "the place of the curse" would sufficiently carry the lesson that God would remember their sins and their iniquities no more, but on this day he adds one more similitude to make his love and pardon doubly sure. Two goats were brought for the people's sacrifice, each without blemish. As they stand waiting before the altar Aaron casts lots upon them—one "for Jehovah," the other for "a scapegoat." The one for Jehovah is "slain for the sin offering," as we have seen. After this has been accomplished Aaron comes back again to the altar, and, placing his hands on the head of the other, the scapegoat, again makes confession of his people's sins. Now comes forward a man who has been chosen for the purpose, and the crowded ranks of the people part, and way is made for him as he leads the victim of the nation's guilt far away into the wilderness, into a land not inhabited—away from all the haunts of men which he loved, to die alone, having borne the nation's sins—not only away from them, but, as it were, away from the sight and memory of God himself. No wonder such a rev-

elation of the love of God for sinners was hard for these poor Hebrews to comprehend; and after thousands of years have come and gone, each day of which has only added new proof of that love, we find it unfathomable still. It is, and will ever be,

“A depth where all our thoughts are drowned.”

One more figure showed to them the dreadful loathsomeness of sin: he who let go the scapegoat and he who carried away the bullock and the goat of the sacrifice beyond the camp were accounted so corrupted by performing these duties that both their clothes and their flesh must be thoroughly washed before they could come back to the camp.

After these services of the day are over the high priest goes into the tabernacle, where he puts off the linen garments, and, bathing once more, returns with the robes of his daily duties. It is the hour of the evening prayer and sacrifice, and with the benediction of infinite blessing the hush of God's peace closes the great day of atonement.

THE INTERCESSOR.

“Father, I bring this worthless child to thee
 To claim thy pardon once, yet once again;
 Receive him at my hands, for he is mine.
 He is a worthless child; he owns his guilt.
 Look not on him: he cannot bear thy glance;
 Look thou on me: his vileness I will hide.
 He pleads not for himself: he dares not plead;
 His cause is mine—I am his advocate.
 By each pure drop of blood I lost for him,
 By all the sorrows graven on my soul,
 By every wound I bear, I claim it due.
 Father Divine, I cannot have him lost;
 He is a worthless soul, *but he is mine.*
 Sin hath destroyed him: sin hath died in me;
 Satan hath bound him: Satan is my slave;
 Death has pursued him: I have conquered Death.
 My Father, hear him now—not him, but me:
 I would not have *him lost* for all the worlds
 Thou for my glory hast ordained and made,
 Because he is a poor and contrite child,
 And all—his every hope—on me reclines.
 I know my children, and I know him mine
 By all the tears he weeps upon my bosom,
 By his full heart that beateth against mine;
 I know him by his sighing and his prayers,
 By his deep trusting love which clings to me.
 I could not bear to see him cast away,
 Weak as he is, the weakest of my flock,
 The one that grieves me most, that loves me least;
 I measure not my love by his returns,
 And, though the stripes I send to speed him home
 Drive him upon the instant from my breast,
 Still he is mine. I drew him from the world;
 He has no right, no home, but in my love.

Though earth and hell against his soul conspire,
I shield him, keep him, save him : we are one.'

"O sinner, what an Advocate hast thou !
Methinks I see him lead the culprit in,
Poor, sorrowing, shamed, all-tremulous with fear,
Prostrate behind his Lord, weak, self-condemned,
Clad with his Saviour's spotless righteousness
Himself to hide, and hear the Father's words :
'My Son, his cause is thine, and thine is mine ;
Take up the poor lost one : he is forgiven.' "

LETTER XIX.

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE.

SUCH, my dear F——, were the services with which these ancient Israelites worshiped God—services full of hope, full of comfort, yet full of a meaning deep and appalling, and full of Christ. To us, indeed, it may seem a strange and fearful service. The language of symbols was, however, the natural language among the nations of the East, and God made use of this to lead his people in their ignorance back to a knowledge of himself. The altar-service was emphatically a service of symbols, and the one great thought of it all was Christ dying for us—the Just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God.

In the beautiful King's Chapel of Oxford, England, the painted windows upon one side illustrate scenes in the Old Testament, and those upon the opposite side scenes from the

New Testament; and when the rays of the setting sun strike through from one to the other, the different scenes are mingled in wonderful beauty. So, when the light of the Holy Spirit shines through the Old Testament and falls upon the New, it blends all in one vision of unutterable harmony and loveliness. The altar-service of ages—at Bethel and at Beersheba, at Rephidim and at Sinai; the altar and the incense, the priest and the victim—merge and melt in the one transcendent scene of Calvary.

Patriarch, prophets, priests and kings of those dim ages “builded better than they knew.” Now consciously, and now unconsciously, they spake of “Him that should come,” and with divine illumination traced that matchless earthly life from its opening to its close. They saw him a King born in obscurity in the Jewish village Bethlehem Ephratah, his mother a virgin, his name the “Wonderful, The Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace.” They saw him despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, bearing our griefs and

carrying our sorrows, and at the close of a life of love and sacrifice cut off out of the land of the living. They saw him hanging upon a tree, numbered with the transgressors, dying with common malefactors. In his final thirst vinegar and gall are given him, and his cry is heard: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" They pierce his hands and his feet, divide his garments and cast lots upon his vesture; and when he dies as a felon dies, he is buried in the grave of the rich.

These prophecies are given as if the writers had been eye-witnesses of the scenes; yet until Jesus of Nazareth lived and died and rose again mystery hung over all the waiting and longing and wondering expectation of the chosen people. There were those who were looking for the consolation of Israel; there were mothers, each hoping that hers might be the child who should redeem Israel; but none foresaw the wonderful way in which their scriptures were to be fulfilled.

We may judge a little what this mystery must have been from the prophecies that

yet remain to be fulfilled. Great changes are coming to the world. The heavens are to be rolled together as a scroll; the elements will melt; the earth will be burned, and new heavens and a new earth will arise as a home for God's people. What is meant by all this we do not know, nor how it is to be fulfilled; but as the prophecies to the Jews *were* fulfilled even beyond all their thoughts, so we know that those which still remain for us will be accomplished, though in ways perhaps higher and more glorious than any of which we have ever dreamed.

And now, gathering up all that was known of the Messiah before he came, all that was revealed as the centuries rolled by, all that was taught at "the altar of earth," we see it was but "a shadow" of the coming reality. The story of that love which brought the Son of God to the world and carried him to the cross, the power of that divine life as it was lived among men—a life spent for them and at last given up to save them—the saints of the Old Testament could know only "in part." Their gospel was the altar and its bleeding sacrifice—a

gospel of promises, of promises seen afar off. Songs of praise even at Sinai may have mingled with their prayers as they surrounded the altar, but these were at best songs of hope in a coming Deliverer. A more heroic faith this must have been, I think, than ours, as we sing:

“My soul *looks back* to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on th’ accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.”

It was not for their eyes to behold their Messiah, nor for them to call him by the sweet name of “Jesus”—the name he received when he came, an infant, to the stable of Bethlehem, the name so full of the blessed assurance, “He shall save his people from their sins;” and yet this was the real burden and meaning of all their religious services. The book of Leviticus is as full of the gospel as any book of the Bible, for it is full of the power of cleansing blood. It is full of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is a thought of very tender pathos that meets us here. It is inexpressibly sad

that the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham, to whom the promises and prophecies concerning Christ were given, should have failed to recognize and receive him when he came. The first to whom the great salvation was brought by the very presence of the Redeemer among them, they rejected him and said, "We will not have this man to rule over us." They gave him up to death with the cry, "His blood be upon us and on our children." Terribly has the cry been realized. Rejecting him, they were rejected by him. God gave them up and left them to the doom of this rejection. But it is not a hopeless doom, for "the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Hosea iii. 5. Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and when the gospel has been preached to all nations and the whole appointed number of the Gentiles is gathered, then "all Israel shall be saved." The Lord hasten it with his appearing!

I should have failed in my hope and purpose, my dear F——, if these letters did not lead each of us to ask, What is this Christ to *me*? Surely, He whom God in so many ways and through so many ages sought so earnestly to set before men as their one and only hope, the only Deliverer from the sins and sorrows of the world, is the One we need. And, whatever the most brilliant teachers may say, if the Bible means anything or is worth anything to us as a guide in the most solemn of all questions, it cannot mean that “the blood of Christ is not an essential thing” for our salvation. From the beginning to the end, from the Paradise lost to the Paradise regained, the one great, constant, unchanging truth of the Bible is that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. The sacrificed Lamb of God alone takes away the sin of the world. The blood of Christ is the only thing in the universe of which it is said, It “cleanses from *all* sin.”

The Epistle to the Hebrews is invaluable for you to read in connection with the Hebrew sacrifices; here you have the Holy

Spirit explaining his own meaning of the types and the symbols of the Old Testament. The body of Christ is the true tabernacle or temple in which God dwells; this was just what the tabernacle of the Wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem always meant. So you see how strictly true were the dear Saviour's words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His *body* was the real temple; and when that came and the only true sacrifice had been offered in it, the use of the old temple was ended. It was time for it to pass away. His human nature was the real sin offering, and he himself was priest as well as victim. No other sacrifice was sufficient for the world's sins, and no other priest was worthy to offer that sacrifice.

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
Nor hyssop-branch, nor sprinkling priest,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash our dismal stain away.

"Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make me white as snow:
No Jewish types could cleanse me so."

The old altars have crumbled, the old temple is in ruins, the daily sacrifice has ceased to bleed, the ministering priest has ended his round of service and the high priest enters no more into the most holy place on earth; but Christ has come—a greater and more perfect Tabernacle—and with his own blood has entered once for all into the holy place on high, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The sweet incense ascends no more from the golden altar, but Christ has gone into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The sacrifice for sin is finished; nothing can be added to it—no work or suffering or sacrifice of ours. We have only to accept it and rejoice in it, and to live for Him who has died for us.

There is only one more thought, dear F——, that I would leave with you: Christ will come again. He who fulfilled the types of the Old Testament, who lived and died on earth and who has gone into heaven to carry on the work of our salvation is to return once more to this world, in the very form in which he went from it. He will

come, not again to suffer and die, but to end his people's sufferings and to make them sharers of his own glory and happiness for ever. And so all the mysteries of his first coming and work and suffering will be crowned with the glory of his second advent. This is now the glad hope of those who look for his appearing—the hope and expectation of his ransomed Church. “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” May you so know and love him now that you shall rejoice to hear the cry, “The Bridegroom cometh!”

“Hark! What a sound, and too divine for hearing,
Stirs on the earth and trembles in the air!
Is it the thunder of the Lord's appearing?
Is it the music of his people's prayer?”

“Surely he cometh, and a thousand voices
Shout to the saints and to the deaf are dumb;
Surely he cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in His coming who hath sworn, ‘I come.’

“This hath he done, and shall not we adore him?
This shall he do, and can we still despair?
Come, let us quickly fling ourselves before him,
Cast at his feet the burden of our care,

“Flash from our eyes the glow of our thanksgiving,
Glad and regretful, confident and calm,
Then through all life and what is after-living
Thrill to the tireless music of a psalm.

“ Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning
He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed :
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning ;
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.”

THE DIVINE CONCLUSION.

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. . . . But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. . . .

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. . . .

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the

tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all ; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant ; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat ; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience ; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building ; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh ; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without

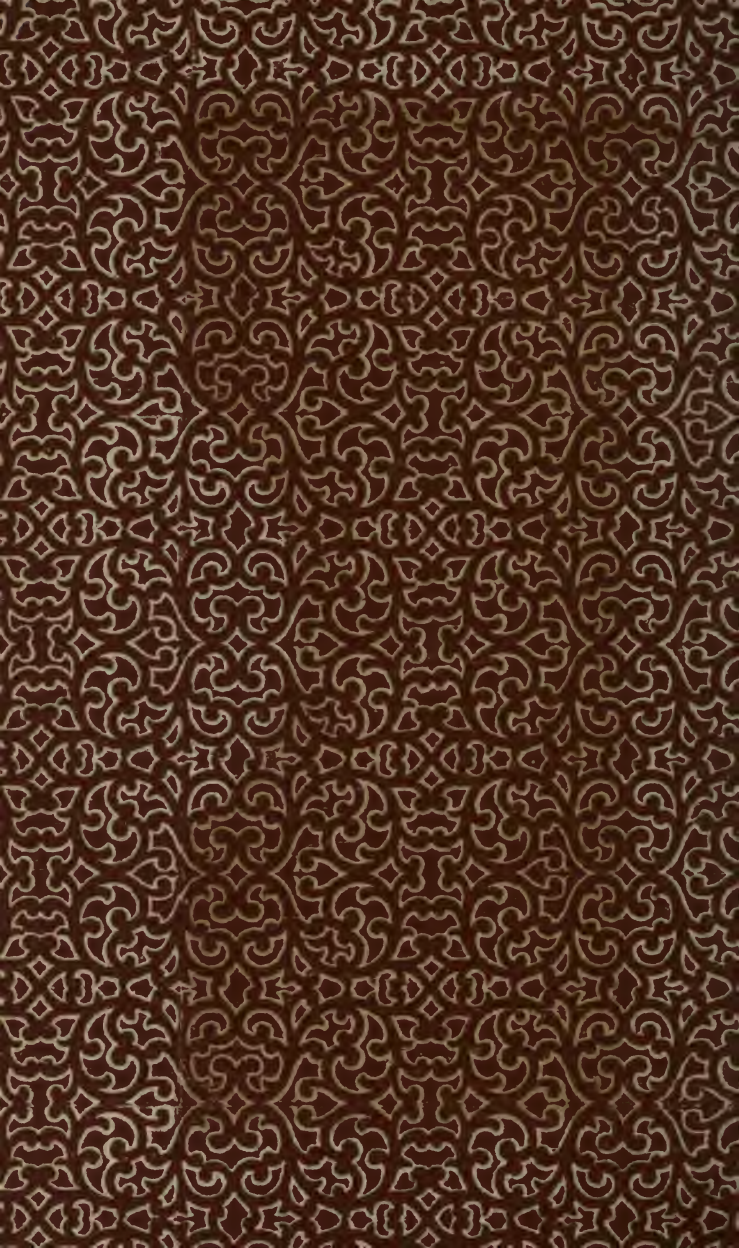
spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. . . .

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. . . . Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,

and find grace to help in time of need. . . . But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

THE END.



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